

President PHILIP RUMORE



September 10, 2009

BUFFALO TEACHERS
FEDERATION, INC

271 PORTER AVENUE
BUFFALO, N.Y. 14201
(716) 881-5400
FAX (716) 881-6678

Mr. Gary Catapano
Sr. Vice President of Safety
FirstGroup America, Inc.
600 Vine Street, Suite 1400
Cincinnati, Ohio 45202

Dear Mr. Catapano:

We are both insulted by and concerned with your letter of September 2, 2009.

You state "As you can see, the proposed use of hand sanitizers on a school bus to control the spread of the H1N1 virus is an oversimplification of the problem and is not a catchall panacea" (emphasis added). Your characterization of our request that hand sanitizers be placed on your school busses "as an oversimplification of the problem and not a panacea" is insulting to the BTF that, if you bothered to read the letters that were enclosed, has made extensive and comprehensive recommendations to our school district relating to the possible spread of the H1N1 virus. The inclusion of hand sanitizers on school busses, that some consider a highly probable site of contamination, is but one of the many recommendations we have made.

You might check our web site www.btfny.org under H1N1, to see all we have done in addition to the copies of letters already sent to you.

In relation to some of the items you raise in your letter:

- We are well aware of the concerns relating to the use of alcohol based hand sanitizers. Enclosed is a copy of our letter to the Superintendent and the Board relating to same and which contains information on non-alcohol based products that apparently kill the H1N1 virus.
- You state you are concerned that the use of hand sanitizers by students, while entering a bus, "would result in unavoidable delays". First, what is more important, a short delay or a student's health? Second, the hand sanitizer could be used when on the bus.
- You state that you would have to "receive permission from all students' legal guardians to make sanitizers available".

First, the District already makes hand sanitizers available in the classrooms. Second, if you need permission, why not seek it? I am sure most parents would allow it.

- You state "And if not all students were using a hand sanitizer, the efficacy of the program is called into question."

This isn't a scientific study that we are proposing. This is doing all we can to protect our children from the H1N1 virus that has been shown to be deadly especially for children. Do you believe that doing nothing in the close confines of a school bus is just as effective?

Perhaps, if you also had to speak with parents whose children were dying or had died as the result of an H1N1 infection, or had received a call that they didn't have sufficient money for their child's funeral, or had a call from a desperate parent on the day of her child's funeral saying that the cemetery would not bury her child if they were not guaranteed payment or someone in your family had contracted H1N1, you would rather, than throw out insults and roadblocks, offer suggestions. Yours is an attitude that we, too often, encounter - look for reasons not to do something or why something can't be done rather than ways to accomplish an important task.

We, like most, don't have all the answers. We do know that proper washing with soap, the isolation of infected people, and hopefully the H1N1 vaccine, are our primary courses of action.

The Buffalo Teachers Federation will continue to leave no stone unturned to ensure that we have done all we can to ensure that there are no more deaths (two of our students died last June) as a result of the H1N1 virus. Our students and their parents, or guardians deserve nothing less.

Sincerely,

BUFFALO TEACHERS FEDERATION, INC.



Philip Rumore
President

PR:ls

Encls: 8

cc: Michael C. Murray, CEO & President, First Group America
Linda Bell, President, First Student, Inc.
Dr. James A. Williams, Superintendent, Buffalo Public Schools
Members, Buffalo Board of Education
Members, BTF Executive Committee

RECEIVED SEP - 8 2009

September 2, 2009

Via Overnight Mail
Philip Rumore
Buffalo Teachers Federation, Inc.
271 Porter Avenue
Buffalo, NY 14201

Re: H1N1 Virus

Dear Mr. Rumore,

In my capacity as Senior Vice President of Safety for FirstGroup America, your letter sent to the attention of Michael Murray and Linda Bell has been referred to me. I commend the teacher's union for taking a proactive approach to the H1N1 matter and I can assure you that First Student is as well. Also, we are working very closely with the Buffalo City School District on this issue. Like many issues surrounding the H1N1 virus, there exists a level of uncertainty that merits further review. The use of hand sanitizers is one of those issues.

There are a myriad of issues at play with the introduction of hand sanitizers for use by students on a school bus. From the outset, First Student has been in frequent communication with the United States Center for Disease Control (CDC) to ensure that our H1N1 response plan is appropriate and prudent. While your recommendation to equip our school buses with hand sanitizers for student use remains under review, please allow me to expand on some of the issues that have given us pause on this issue.

From a logistical standpoint, installing hand sanitizers on all of our buses poses problems. If all students were to avail themselves to a hand sanitizer while entering a bus, that would result in unavoidable delays on all trips. As well, First Student and the school district would have to notify and receive permission from all students' legal guardians to make the hand sanitizer available. Beyond that, use of a hand sanitizer could not be made mandatory to all students because of privacy and medical (for example, allergic reactions) issues. And if not all students were using a hand sanitizer, the efficacy of the program is called into question.

Beyond the logistical and procedural issues, a child's direct access to hand sanitizer raises parallel safety issues. Hand sanitizers contain alcohol and it only takes a small amount of alcohol to poison a child. Indeed, a review of a hand sanitizer bottle reveals warnings to contact the Poison Center immediately if the liquid is ingested. Some consumer outlets have classified hand sanitizers as a poison and have recommended keeping it away from children in the home. At the very least, adult supervision is recommended with a child's use of a hand sanitizer and that is not possible on a school bus.

As you can see, the proposed use of hand sanitizers on a school bus to control the spread of the H1N1 virus is an oversimplification of the problem and is not a catchall panacea. Along those lines, First Student will continue to address and explore these issues with the Buffalo City School District to develop an appropriate action plan. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Gary Catapano
Sr. Vice President of Safety,
FirstGroup America, Inc.

cc: John Fahey - Buffalo City School District