

December 1, 2015

Dear Madison Board of Education members,

I am writing to you on behalf of my son, Nicholas Earl, who has a life threatening food allergy with a high likeliness of anaphylaxis as well as other children in our school system with similar conditions. Attached is a letter from his allergist.

Nicholas is currently a fourth grader at Ryerson who is highly allergic to peanuts and tree nuts so the school bus ride continues to be a safety concern. Unlike some other food allergies, when a person reacts with a nut allergy, minutes can literally mean the difference between life and death. In March of 2015, I contacted Superintendent Tom Scarice with a request to have Madison school bus drivers trained to administer Epipens. At that time, I was referred to Art Sickle who advised me "*Madison Public Schools has not required bus drivers to be responsible for administering medication of any kind.*" Mr. Sickle also mentioned that if a student had a 504 plan or an IEP which specifies that an aide must be present on the bus to potentially administer medication, the District would provide that person and see to their training, rather than the bus company. At that point, we taught Nicholas how to self administer his Epipen and had him carry it in his backpack. Nicholas was also well educated that this should never be removed from his backpack unless he needed to administer it to himself.

Nicholas was personally faced with a potentially dangerous situation on the school bus on June 16th. A seemingly well-meaning child offered my son an Oreo which he typically can have. Nicholas noticed that the Oreo looked "different" and told the child he could not have it because it could contain nuts and he was very allergic. The child said it was a peanut butter Oreo and then ate it when Nicholas declined. Nicholas went on to explain that he was so allergic that he could not even have this child touch him after touching peanut butter. The child then challenged my son and asked if he could "try touching him" to see what would happen. I was informed of the incident by Kelly Spooner and the school addressed this with the parent of the other child. The day after this incident, the bus driver had not been made aware of any incident until I informed him. At this point, I again requested through Mr. Sickle that my request for Epipens on school buses to be the standard for all children be reconsidered. In addition, I requested if this request would not be considered, then I wanted *my son's bus driver* in the fall be trained on how and when to administer an Epipen. I offered to provide the bus driver with the Epipen for them to carry while my child is in their care. I was told my request would be considered over the summer.

In August, I was referred to Liz Battaglia to assist us in creating a 504 Plan for Nicholas. On October 14th we met with the principal, school nurse, school psychologist and his teacher to review the 504 plan request. Once the plan was in place, I requested an "accommodation" for Nicholas as it states is his right under a 504, to have his bus driver or adult designate be Epipen trained. I again offered to provide an

Epipen to the bus driver and assist in training. This request was denied as it is not part of the current policy.

On October 21st I learned from my older son Andrew Earl, who is a sixth grader at Brown, that a child on another bus had an allergic reaction on the way to school.

According to that child's parent, the child had to wait *more than 20 minutes* before having medication available and she was fortunate that she only ingested one of her milder nut allergies. Andrew's bus waited at Ryerson while waiting for the bus with the medical emergency to arrive at Brown. I am told that students were discussing how the bus driver having the medical emergency had to "floor-it" to the school bypassing other stops in an effort to get this child medical attention. Thankfully the child was ok however, how many other children were potentially at risk during this avoidable incident? I again, reached out to Mr. Sickle to & Liz Battaglia to request this policy be changed before a tragedy occurs.

On October 22nd I contacted the bus company directly and spoke to Magda Grayson and mentioned my request about bus drivers carrying Epipens. When I mentioned the incident that had occurred with the student at Brown she abruptly said "that child should have had been carrying their own Epipen" her lack of empathy or concern for this child and mine was insulting to say the least.

In November, Nicholas was approached on the bus again by the same child who offered him the cookies last spring. This time, the child was offering him a Snickers candy (contains peanuts). I notified Kelly Spooner and she addressed the issue with the other child. It is my understanding that this child was removed from the bus for a few days and now rides the bus with an adult supervisor. It is appalling to me that Durham School Services provides an adult to babysit a child with behavior problems but will not provide an adult for my child to address a potential life threatening situation.

I have been repeatedly reminded of the "no food on the bus policy" which provides no comfort as it is a policy that is 1) not enforced and 2) my child tends to have a delayed reaction and doesn't need to be eating something on the bus to be concerned that there is a risk of anaphylaxis. I do not believe there was food ingested on the bus incident that occurred October 21st but cannot be certain.

I am available to discuss this further with any or all members of the Board. Thank you for your consideration of requiring bus drivers to be trained to administer Epipens and your commitment to keeping our children safe during all aspects of the school day.

Sincerely,

Vicki Earl

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