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## News for Immediate Release

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### **Auditor General DePasquale's Audit Helped Crestwood School District Escape Costly Bus Contract, Maintain Required Bus Driver Records**

**HARRISBURG** – Auditor General Eugene DePasquale today released his performance audit of the Crestwood School District in Luzerne County, which has helped the district make needed changes to its transportation services contract.

According to the audit, the district approved a busing contract in 2016 that was described as a five-year contract, but included three, automatic five-year extensions, annual fixed increases and a monthly fuel surcharge. The contractor also asserted first right of refusal if the contract was put out for bid again – meaning there was a chance the contract could never end.

“School boards should avoid signing contracts that renew automatically because that’s a huge red flag for taxpayers,” DePasquale said. “Putting contracts out for bid every few years helps to maximize savings and that frees up money needed for classroom instruction.”

As a result of events that transpired during DePasquale’s audit, the district recently took steps to hire a new busing contractor.

While working on this audit last fall, DePasquale’s auditors found up-to-date background checks were not on file for the district’s school bus drivers. That discovery prompted the district to cancel two days of classes in October until all required certifications and records could be updated. Subsequently, two senior district administrators were placed on leave and eventually resigned.

“This case demonstrates the value of regularly auditing school districts,” DePasquale said. “If not for this audit, who knows when – or if – Crestwood leadership would have realized it was not in compliance with the law.”

The audit notes the district failed in its legal responsibility to ensure contracted bus drivers were qualified and cleared to transport students.

“District officials initially tried to blame the busing contractor, but the responsibility for ensuring all legal requirements are met rests with the district itself,” DePasquale said. “We actually had to obtain records from the busing contractor because the district could not provide any documentation.”

Auditors found that records were incomplete for 41 of the 46 drivers in question. State law requires school districts, charter schools, intermediate units and area vocational-technical schools to have the following documentation on all bus drivers:

- Valid driver’s license with S-endorsement for operation of a school bus;
- Annual physical examination;
- Criminal Background Check;
- Federal Criminal History Record;
- Pennsylvania Child Abuse History Clearance; and
- Arrest/Conviction Report and Certification Form PDE 6004.

“While Crestwood officials responded promptly to my team’s discovery about missing records, there is no excuse why the bus drivers’ background checks and clearances were not already complete and on file at the District,” DePasquale said. “It is the school district’s responsibility to make sure they have the required documents on file for all bus drivers,” he said, noting that none of the drivers for Crestwood had criminal convictions that would have banned them from transporting students.

Crestwood was not the first school district the auditor general flagged for not keeping track of bus drivers’ records. DePasquale’s team previously discovered 10 drivers in various school districts who should have been barred from transporting students because of criminal convictions. Auditors also found that, since 2013, 59 school districts in 29 counties were missing driver documentation or had drivers with one or more missing certifications or criminal background checks.

Review the [Crestwood School District audit report](#) and learn more about the Department of the Auditor General online at [www.PaAuditor.gov](http://www.PaAuditor.gov).

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