

Committee: Economic Matters

Testimony on: HB 696 - "Electric School Bus Pilot Program"

Organization: Climate Parents of Prince George's

Person Submitting: Joseph Jakuta, Lead Volunteer

Position: Favorable

Hearing Date: February 10, 2022



Dear Mr. Chairman and Committee Members:

Thank you for considering our testimony today in support of HB 696 - "Electric School Bus Pilot Program." Climate Parents is a campaign to reduce climate change causing pollution in our schools and our group is active in Prince George's County. In particular, we are currently working directly with Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS) technical staff and other advocates to develop a Climate Action Plan for PGCPS.

The need to transition to zero emission school buses is vital for Maryland to meet its obligation to the current generation of young people and to future generations. We cannot become the zero emission society that we need to by 2045 if our school systems continue to rely on dirty 20th century transportation technologies.

This approach of utilizing electric school bus batteries for grid support has the potential to make electric buses more affordable by allowing for an innovative way to finance the higher up front costs. Vehicle-to-grid (V2G) school buses will also help to both reduce the impact on reliability to the grid renewables have and limit the time dirty peaking, often oil-fired, power plants are needed to run during hot ozone polluted summer days.

Electric buses are also quite important to our children. Diesel school buses produce high levels of fine particulate matter exhaust, which when inhaled can lead to premature death¹, impact learning², and exacerbate asthma.³ It might be hard to imagine, but every time a diesel bus door opens the exhaust floats in and right through the bus – it is just like the children are breathing straight from the tailpipe.⁴

Through our work with PGCPS we saw an analysis developed by the American Council for an Energy Efficient Economy that showed first hand which communities in Prince George's County are most affected negatively by air pollution from school buses and these are the same communities that are easiest to electrify bus routes for. We also heard directly from the PGCPS Transportation Department that they are "ready for the future" and about to put their pilot electric bus funded through the Volkswagen Settlement in service.⁵

We do urge caution when the Public Service Commission (PSC) is approving applications. In the 2000's Maryland investor owned utilities (IOUs) divested from owning capacity resources and IOUs

¹ Liu, Norrice M, and Jonathan Grigg. "Diesel, children and respiratory disease." *BMJ pediatrics open* vol. 2,1 e000210. 24 May. 2018, doi:10.1136/bmjpo-2017-000210

² Costa, Lucio G et al. "Developmental impact of air pollution on brain function." *Neurochemistry international* vol. 131 (2019): 104580. doi:10.1016/j.neuint.2019.104580

³ Sibanda, E., Makaza, N. Health effects of diesel engine exhaust emissions exposure (DEEE) can mimic allergic asthma and rhinitis. *Allergy Asthma Clin Immunol* **15**, 31 (2019).

⁴ NRDC. "No Breathing in the Aisle: Diesel Exhaust Inside School Buses." <https://www.nrdc.org/sites/default/files/schoolbus.pdf>

⁵ PGCPS Climate Change Action Plan Focus Workgroup November 17, 2022 Meeting. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BW1h81xxbPY>

typically bid into a capacity market rather than directly managing assets so there must be assurances that IOUs have the necessary expertise to manage such a program in their applications to the PSC.

We also reinforce support for inclusion of training requirements, seat belt requirements, and requirements to work in underserved areas since these are important for successful implementation of the program and to achieve equitable safety and health outcomes.

We encourage a FAVORABLE report for this important legislation.