

Committee: Finance

Testimony on: SB 948 - "Electric School Bus Pilot Program"

Organization: Climate Parents of Prince George's

Person Submitting: Joseph Jakuta, Lead Volunteer

Position: Favorable

Hearing Date: March 22, 2022



Dear Ms. Chairwoman and Committee Members:

Thank you for considering our testimony today in support of SB 948 - "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, elected officials, and other advocates to develop a Climate Change Action Plan for PGCPS as part of a focus work group created by the Board of Education.

The need to transition to zero emission school buses is vital for Maryland to meet its obligation to leave a better world 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.

Electric buses are also quite important to the health of 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, among other problems.³ It might be hard to imagine, but every time a diesel bus door opens the exhaust flows in and through the bus – it is just like the children are breathing straight from the tailpipe.⁴ And while students and drivers themselves are the most exposed, the communities that these buses traverse on their way to school also experience this harmful diesel pollution.

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 to limit the time dirty peaking, often oil-fired, power plants are needed to run during hot ozone polluted summer days.

Through our work with PGCPS on the focus workgroup we saw an analysis developed by the American Council for an Energy Efficient Economy that showed first hand which communities 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

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>

are “ready for the future” and about to put their pilot electric bus funded through the Volkswagen Settlement in service.⁵

Additionally, recent recommendations transmitted from the aforementioned focus work group, recommend that 50% of PGCPS’s bus routes be electrified by 2030, 100% by 2040, expansion of training for mechanics and drivers on electric buses, and examination of V2G as a potential funding mechanism.⁶ SB 948 will provide a crucial tool for meeting these recommendations and while these recommendations were developed for PGCPs, they are certainly relevant to other local education agencies in Maryland.

We also want to 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.

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

⁶ PGCPs Board of Education Climate Change Action Plan Focus Work Group. “Climate Change Action Plan (CCAP) Priority Recommendations.” [https://go.boarddocs.com/mabe/pgcps/Board.nsf/c4cf1644198dfd9986257503000d636f/1487cbd08950f0ad85258809007b70c5/\\$FILE/PGCPS%20Climate%20Change%20Action%20Plan%20Recommendations%20-%20FINAL%20March%2015%202022r.pdf](https://go.boarddocs.com/mabe/pgcps/Board.nsf/c4cf1644198dfd9986257503000d636f/1487cbd08950f0ad85258809007b70c5/$FILE/PGCPS%20Climate%20Change%20Action%20Plan%20Recommendations%20-%20FINAL%20March%2015%202022r.pdf)