

Committee: Environment and Transportation
Testimony on: HB 356 - "Monitoring Cameras and Safety Measures"
Organization: Climate Parents of Prince George's
Person Submitting: Joseph Jakuta, Lead Volunteer
Position: Favorable
Hearing Date: February 8, 2024



Dear Mr. Chairman and Committee Members:

Thank you for considering our testimony to HB 356, which creates an exemption to ticketing for certain individuals when they do not stop when school bus stop signs are extended and require the State Highway Administration (SHA) to conduct a safety assessment of school bus stops in one county in the state. 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 recently worked directly with Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS) technical staff and other advocates to develop a first in the national School Climate Change Action Plan.

Multiple-lane roads are some of the most dangerous roads to cross, especially for young children attempting to access a bus stop. To create a system that allows for drivers to put student's in danger with no repercussions is moving Maryland in the wrong direction when it comes to safe access to school bus stops.

Secondly, it is challenging to see why the provisions requiring SHA to assess unsafe bus stops are limited to Montgomery. SHA manages roads in every Maryland County as well as Baltimore City and it is NOT equitable that SHA would be required to conduct this study throughout Maryland. It is especially concerning since medians and pedestrian refuge islands can make crossing wide streets safer.¹ That only one county would benefit from this effort to increase safety while taking away an enforcement mechanism is problematic.

We do understand a bit where this is coming from, but think the solution is all wrong. If the idea is that drivers are unaware of new Maryland laws and should be left off with a warning. For one driver's are not required to show knowledge of new laws when they renew their licensees. It is probably one of the only licenses that Maryland issues where the recipient is not required to maintain their skills and knowledge in order to keep the privilege that comes with the license. Rather than having drivers test whether they are familiar with traffic laws as our kids are walking to the bus stop, why not have them demonstrate that they know what the laws are in order to renew the license that provides them the privilege to drive a car on our roads. It would make our kids and all of the other vulnerable road users safe.

But this legislation certainly does not.

We encourage a UNFAVORABLE report for this legislation.

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<https://highways.dot.gov/safety/proven-safety-countermeasures/medians-and-pedestrian-refuge-islands-urban-and-suburban-areas>