

Committee: Environment and Transportation

Testimony on: HB 364 - "Traffic Control Device Monitoring Systems – Authorization"

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 364 - **"Traffic Control Device Monitoring Systems – Authorization."** 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 nation School Climate Change Action Plan. This Climate Change Action Plan was adopted unanimously by the PGCPS Board of Education in April of 2022.

Walking to school is a great option for a more sustainable, healthier learning environment. When students walk to school they are more active, and physical activity has been shown to be related to improved educational outcomes.¹

When it comes to Elementary Schools, in Prince George's County students are not guaranteed bus service if they live within 1½ miles of school. Middle and high school students face the same issue, but they have a 2-mile walking radius. If these students don't walk or bike, they wind up getting dropped off by car, which increases air pollution at school entrances, as well as greenhouse gas emissions.

Walking is one of the best options for students to access schools if they don't have bus access, but we learned through surveys that were conducted when formulating the PGCPS Climate Change Action Plan that one of the main barriers is the fear that walking isn't safe. Our community was reminded that we aren't ensuring our students' safety on their walks to school by the tragedy at Riverdale Elementary School on November 20, 2023.

While no solution is perfect, one of the best ways to change harmful behavior is to know that punishment is quick and certain, and traffic cameras do just that when it comes to dangerous driving. An added benefit is that traffic cameras do not discriminate; they simply record when a vehicle breaks the law, and a ticket is mailed. HB 364 will allow for such enforcement when it comes to stop sign behavior, and we favor that.

I know from my personal experience walking my kids to our bus stop in the morning just how bad the traffic scofflaws are. Drivers stop at the crosswalk rather than at the stop sign. They drive through stop signs without stopping, zip past the bus with the stop sign out while it is loading, and, worst of all, drive into oncoming traffic to go around the cars that are patiently waiting for the bus to load.

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/physicalactivity/facts.htm>; Tomporowski PD, Davis CL, Miller PH, Naglieri JA. Exercise and Children's Intelligence, Cognition, and Academic Achievement. *Educ Psychol Rev.* 2008 Jun 1;20(2):111-131. Available at: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2748863/>; <https://www.who.int/europe/news/item/17-02-2021-who-reviews-effect-of-physical-activity-on-enhancing-academic-achievement-at-school>

This dangerous driving will not change without swift and certain enforcement, and our children will continue to face excessive danger by simply trying to walk to school. This must change, and HB 364 will be a great step forward to a safer, healthier world for our children.

We encourage a **FAVORABLE** report for this legislation.