

Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment

Testimony on: SB 779 - "Climate Solutions Now Act Affordability Act of 2025"

Organization: Climate Parents of Prince George's

Person Submitting: Joseph Jakuta, Lead Volunteer

Position: Unfavorable

Hearing Date: February 27, 2025



Dear Mr. Chairman and Committee Members:

Thank you for considering our testimony to SB 779, "Climate Solutions Now Act Affordability Act of 2025." 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 technical staff and advocates to develop a first-in-the-nation School Climate Change Action Plan.

First, we wanted to say we understand the reasoning for this legislation given our budget circumstances, but we are greatly concerned that there are no guardrails on claiming that a decision isn't economical and that they would need to be in place for this legislation not to harm the progress we need to make as Marylanders towards a sustainable future. Our comments are focused on the amendments proposed to 2-1505, but these specifics would appear to be generalizable to all of the amendments in the bill.

One guardrail that is not in place is how operating costs are considered. There are known maintenance and fuel cost savings from electric school buses that would accrue if life cycle costs are looked at, but not if only upfront capital costs are considered in an economic decision. Any consideration of economic feasibility must be strictly from a life-cycle perspective and that is not specified in this legislation.

Another guardrail that is not in place is a requirement to consider the negative health impacts on students and their economic costs. Diesel pollution is known to circulate throughout the cabin and leads to asthma attacks and worse learning outcomes. The former of these impacts can have a direct economic impact on students in terms of the need for hospital visits and lost learning days.¹ Any consideration of economic feasibility must include the health benefits in terms of economics for the students and that is not specified in this legislation.

A final guardrail that is not in place is a requirement to consider the economic benefits of vehicle to grid technology. School buses are often idled throughout the summer months when solar production is at its highest and the batteries on electric school buses can be used to a grid storage resource, which can receive financial compensation. In fact the General Assembly passed a pilot program to put this to a test as part of the Climate Solutions Now Act. The direct financial benefits of using buses in an electricity market need to also be considered and that is not clear in this legislation.

In the end if proper guardrails are put into this legislation, this could help with the edge cases, where electric school buses do not make sense yet, but as written this bill would appear be creating a loophole that would help to avoid a transition that needs to be made rather than surgically allowing for edge cases.

We encourage an **UNFAVORABLE** report for this important legislation.

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<https://www.news-medical.net/news/20240528/Huge-health-and-climate-benefits-of-replacing-old-diesel-school-buses-with-electric-in-the-United-States.aspx>