

Committee: Judicial Proceedings

Testimony on: SB 808 - "Stop Sign Monitoring Systems - School Bus Stops"

Organization: Climate Parents of Prince George's

Person Submitting: Joseph Jakuta, Lead Volunteer

Position: Favorable

Hearing Date: March 5, 2025



Dear Mr. Chairman and Committee Members:

Thank you for considering our testimony to SB 808. 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 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.

We were particularly grateful to the Prince George's County Delegation for their work last session in passing HB 364, which allows for stop sign cameras to be installed in school zones in Prince George's County. However, this did leave out one group of students, those waiting at bus stops outside of school zones. SB 808 works to rectify that by also allowing for stop signs to be placed at school bus stops on state highways outside of school zones, which are often dangerous places for students to wait for the bus.

The best enforcement is when it is swift and certain, and stop-sign cameras work to do that. Given resource constraints we cannot rely on officers with competing and pressing priorities to enforce traffic safety laws everywhere in Prince George's County. Stop sign cameras alleviate that since cameras do not need to rest and can ensure that drivers that are not following our traffic safety laws are swiftly a ticket with consistency. That is how behavior changes and will make our kids safer.

School buses are also a more sustainable way for students to arrive at school. In lieu of a bus, students would need their parents to drive them to school or for high schoolers to drive themselves, even though a bus will be coming by for them anyway. Taking the bus means one less car emitting pollution and idling at drop off in front of a school, which is better. Furthermore, the transition to electric school buses is underway, making pollution from school buses themselves even less of an impact on the students riding them. We definitely want students that cannot otherwise walk to school to be safe waiting for the bus and SB 808 will help.

In the grand scheme it would be better if our children's safety were given credence at all times of the day and days of the week, and not just when they were en route to school, meaning that these programs were made universal rather than this piecemeal approach. But we are thankful that SB 808 is making an important step towards increasing the safety of children waiting for the school bus.

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