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Oversight Committee on Personnel



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**THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES**  
**ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401**

**HB 615, Education-School Construction - Pedestrian Safety Plans Testimony**

Madam Chair, Vice Chair, Esteemed Colleagues,

Thank you for the opportunity to present today on my legislation HB 615, the School Pedestrian Safety Act. It's an honor to serve on this committee and to testify before you this afternoon.

Crossing the road can be a dangerous undertaking in Maryland. Almost everyone is a pedestrian at one time or another so pedestrian safety affects all of us. Multiples challenges face us as we work to keep our pedestrians safe -- families settling into neighborhoods built without crosswalks, young students walking to school, distracted cell phone users not paying attention to traffic, drivers on congested streets who simply don't see pedestrians dodging vehicles, and language barriers that may make warning signs ineffective. It is time for schools, parents, and communities to work together to ensure safe routes for all pedestrians particularly families and students walking to and from school.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration:

- There was a more than 3% increase in the number of pedestrians killed in traffic crashes in 2018, totaling 6,283 deaths -- the most deaths since 1990.<sup>1</sup>
- In 2017, a pedestrian was killed every 88 minutes.<sup>2</sup>

The number of pedestrian fatalities continues to mount. According to the 2018 Maryland Pedestrian Safety Program Area Brief issued by the MD Motor Vehicles Administration:

- Overall, the number of pedestrian crashes and those resulting in injuries and/or fatalities have increased in Maryland over the past five years.<sup>3</sup>
- Fatalities are high among pedestrian-involved crashes. Annually, Maryland drivers are involved in over 3,000 pedestrian crashes, and nearly 92% of those result in injury or fatality.<sup>4</sup>
- Almost one in five people killed in Maryland in a traffic accident was a pedestrian.<sup>5</sup>
- The fall season accounts for the highest number of total pedestrian crashes.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Pedestrian Safety." NHTSA, October 24, 2019. <https://www.nhtsa.gov/road-safety/pedestrian-safety>.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>3</sup> Maryland Vehicle Administration "Pedestrian Safety in Maryland." Glen Burnie, PDF. 2018.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.,

Our pedestrians should feel safe at all times for making environmentally friendly choices of choosing to walk places instead of relying on transportation. But in reality, on average, more than 3,000 pedestrians are injured annually in Maryland and nearly 100 are killed<sup>7</sup>. Of those 3,000 pedestrian injuries, 578 of them were children below the age of 19<sup>8</sup>. Of those 578, 214 were hurt walking to or from school.<sup>9</sup>

This bill is simple and straightforward and requires schools to develop pedestrian safety plans in order to access construction funding for new schools or additions.

Specifically, the bill requires:

- 1) School systems seeking state funds for the construction of a new school or additions to an existing school that would increase the capacity by more than 100 students to submit a pedestrian safety plan to the IAC;
- 2) The safety plan must identify existing and potential safe routes for students to walk or bike to school;
- 3) The safety plan must evaluate existing infrastructure, including sidewalks, along current and potential routes to determine if increased capacity is needed;
- 4) An analysis of existing and potential school zones, including the need for expanding school zones on state and county roads; and
- 5) Schools systems to submit documentation of public participation related to the safety plan including minutes from a public meeting.

By bringing together schools, community stakeholders, students and parents, this bill provides a critical step forward in developing comprehensive plans to protect our children as they travel to and from school. I urge a favorable report on HB 615.

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<sup>7</sup> Montgomery County Department of Transportation. "Welcome to the Blair Walk Project." Spring, 2012

<sup>8</sup> Maryland Highway Safety Office. "Pedestrian on Foot Involved" Glen Burnie, PDF, April 30, 2019.

<sup>9</sup> Eiten, K. "Look Up, Look Out' Campaign Urges Drivers, Pedestrians To Be Safe This Back-To-School Season." CBS Baltimore. CBS Baltimore, August 21, 2019. <https://baltimore.cbslocal.com/2019/08/21/back-to-school-pedestrian-safety-safe-driving/>.