



MONTGOMERY COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION

Expanding Opportunity and Unleashing Potential

850 Hungerford Drive ♦ Room 123 ♦ Rockville, Maryland 20850

BILL: HB1226
TITLE: Vehicle Laws - School Bus Safety - Occupant Capacity
DATE: 2/28/2020
POSITION: OPPOSE
COMMITTEE: Environment and Transportation
CONTACT: Danielle M. Susskind, Coordinator, Legislative Affairs
Danielle_M_Susskind@mcpsmd.org

The Montgomery County Board of Education (Board) **opposes** HB1226.

This bill removes the ability of school buses to operate with one student standing in the bus aisle per row of seats and requires the bus to be operated with only the number of students that can be accommodated in seating capacity. Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) programs and allocates transportation to provide seated capacity for each student on the school bus. It is MCPS practice to operate buses with students standing only as a temporary measure as needed, and only within the current law allowing one standing student per row of seats. However, limited circumstances arise in which the ability to operate the bus with limited standing students is necessary. For example, early in the school year it may not be fully known how many students will be at a given route on the first day of school. Under this law, if there were one or two students above seated capacity at a stop, the bus would have to leave those students behind for another bus to come, or wait with them for another bus to come, making some students late for school. If it is identified that a bus route is continuously over seated capacity, MCPS allocates an additional bus so that students are not standing as a regular practice.

On other occasions, if a bus breaks down or is running late, a bus can go by and get a limited number of students preventing them from being late to school and from waiting outside for a fully separate new bus. This law would prevent these limited circumstances from being mitigated with limited standing in a safe and supervised manner.

For these reasons, the Board **opposes** this legislation and urges an unfavorable report.