

**Testimony of Joanna Bache Tobin
Before the Environment and Transportation Committee**

**In Support of HB1226
Vehicle Laws—School Bus Safety—Occupant Capacity**

Chair Barve, Vice Chair Stein, and members of the Environment and Transportation Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on HB1226. My name is Joanna Bache Tobin. I come before you today as a parent of an Annapolis High School student and Vice President of the PTSA there. I am also an educator.

I urge you to support HB1226. It is essential to secure the safety of our children as they ride in buses to and from school and on school-related activities. Allowing children to stand or crouch on a moving bus clearly is unsafe and inappropriate. Having a statute on the books that allows for our children to stand while a bus is moving speaks to a disregard for their safety and for their dignity as human beings. Our children deserve better from us.

The need for this bill first came to my attention when I heard a parent testify before the Annapolis Education Commission. She said that when she had called the schools to complain that her child's bus was overcrowded and that students were forced to stand, she was told that *Maryland law allows children to stand on moving buses*. Knowing this is wrong, I feel fortunate to have had the opportunity to bring this issue to the attention of Delegate Cain -- I am extremely grateful to her and others for sponsoring this bill to remediate a dangerous practice.

Passing HB 1226 is particularly important to students in Maryland's urban areas that are densely populated and also have pockets of concentrated poverty, such as Annapolis and Baltimore City. Students in cities such as these depend solely on bus transportation to get them to and from school. It is therefore especially important that we ensure their transportation is safe and well regulated.

In conclusion, I urge you to pass this bill to the Floor. In doing so, you will be sending a powerful message to our young people that we value them and their safety. As a parent and an educator, one of the most important lessons I have learned is that *children don't do what we say, but they will do as we do*. In passing this legislation, we are not just saying that we care about our children's safety but we are putting our words into action.

Thank you.