



HB19 EDUCATION - SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION - PEDESTRIAN SAFETY PLANS (SAFE WALK TO SCHOOL ACT)

April 5, 2022

EDUCATION, HEALTH, AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

OPPOSE

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Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS) opposes **HB19 Education - School Construction - Pedestrian Safety Plans (Safe Walk to School Act)**.

While AACPS clearly supports the concept of safe and appropriate walking and biking routes to schools, the creation of a detailed pedestrian safety plan does not fall within the purview of a local school system. This is a county government function and should remain as such. Local school systems do not have any control over sidewalks or bike paths that extend beyond the edge of our public school property lines. Any identified gaps would be outside the school district's ability to remedy. As most county departments of public works and transportation already produce transportation functional master plans and routinely undertake walkshed/bike-shed studies, such activities are more suitably placed in those departments at the county level. This is supported by the fact that county government, not the local board of education, has jurisdiction to acquire rights of way and make infrastructure improvements within communities. The amendment to the bill which requires a county board of education to make all determinations regarding a pedestrian safety plan is also problematic as a county board of education does not have the expertise to make any such determinations.

Additionally, the State will not participate in the cost of the study, resulting in an unfunded mandate for AACPS. The unfunded mandate would have an estimated fiscal impact of approximately \$30,000 per public school construction project site in order to have a transportation engineering consulting company undertake the requisite study, hold the public hearings, and produce the finished pedestrian safety plan report. Given that AACPS could potentially undertake five qualifying projects per year, it could amount to at least \$150,000 in unfunded expenditures per fiscal year.

Finally, the district is concerned that the bill relies on an arbitrary distinction between high-and low-density counties. While the bill addresses a serious student safety policy area, it is one that AACPS firmly believes should remain in the context of local intergovernmental cooperation and coordination of planning and the investment of available local, State, and federal funding.

Accordingly, AACPS respectfully requests an **UNFAVORABLE** committee report on HB19.