



Committee: Education, Health & Environmental Affairs
Testimony on: HB0019 - Education-School Construction-Pedestrian Safety Plans (Safe Walk to School Act)
Organization: Climate Justice Wing of the Maryland Legislative Coalition
Submitting: Diana Younts, Co-Chair
Position: Favorable
Hearing Date: April 5, 2022

Dear Mr. Chairman and Committee Members:

Thank you for allowing our testimony today in support of HB0019. The MLC Climate Justice Wing, a statewide coalition of over 50 grassroots and professional organizations, urges you to vote favorably on HB0019. We believe this bill would help to prioritize traffic safety and could potentially prevent needless crashes involving students and their families near school buildings throughout the state. We realize that many people are working to educate students about streets safety, which is good. Many kids in Maryland are taught about cross walks and distracted driving, and asked to not wear ear buds or text while crossing a street.

But we need to think about kids, not just cars, when we build and renovate our neighborhoods, and that includes school renovations. Engineering and construction planning can go a long way to preventing pedestrian dangers for all. Every community has its local schools, and almost every neighborhood in our state county is abutted by at least one school building, especially in urban areas. The impact of traffic around those schools is tremendous. With each school holding as many 1400 children, there are literally hundreds of parents doing drop-off and pick up in our neighborhoods and hundreds of big yellow buses circling around daily. Many of our neighborhoods lack pedestrian infrastructure such as sidewalks.

Many schools are near multilane roads that lack space for pedestrians and have few cross walks. Too often in the construction and renovation of schools, little attention is paid to traffic safety and it is often too dangerous for kids to bike or walk to school. In an age where we are trying hard to reduce the impact of climate change and get our kids to live more healthy lifestyles by exercising more, this just seems wrong. Kids should be able to walk safely if they live within the school's mandated walk radius. Currently, residents find that they are often not consulted when it comes to traffic impact of a new or renovated and expanded school, despite having decades of experience navigating their own local streets. Pedestrian

data needs to be gathered and taken seriously.

In some neighborhoods, parents have been able to form traffic safety groups and volunteer at pick up and drop off times to increase safety. But poverty isn't just about lack of money, it is also lack of time. At many urban schools where traffic issues are most pressing, parents are working multiple jobs just to make ends meet. Pedestrian safety often remains a large and often unaddressed need. It is not equitable to expect that all parents have the means to compensate for bad street design by taking time away from work or adjusting their work schedules and routines. It would be far more effective to build school buildings that function with pedestrian needs in mind from the start. We can alleviate the burden of traffic safety from principals and parents by prioritizing pedestrian and bike safety during construction.

We therefore support this bill and recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.

MLC Climate Justice Wing:

Assateague Coastal Trust
Maryland Legislative Coalition
MD Campaign for Environmental Human Rights
Chesapeake Climate Action Network
WISE
Frack Free Frostburg
Mountain Maryland Movement
Clean Water Action
Howard County Indivisible
Howard County Sierra Club
Columbia Association Climate change and sustainability advisory committee
HoCo Climate Action
CHEER
Climate XChange - Maryland
Mid-Atlantic Field Representative/
National Parks Conservation Association
350 Montgomery County
Glen Echo Heights Mobilization
The Climate Mobilization Montgomery County
Montgomery County Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions
Montgomery Countryside Alliance

Takoma Park Mobilization Environment Committee
Audubon Naturalist Society
Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Church
Environmental Justice Ministry
Coalition For Smarter Growth
DoTheMostGood Montgomery County
MCPS Clean Energy Campaign
MoCo DCC
Potomac Conservancy
Casa de Maryland
Nuclear Information & Resource Service
Clean Air Prince Georges
Laurel Resist
Greenbelt Climate Action Network
Maryland League of Conservation Voters
Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland
Concerned Citizens Against Industrial Cafos
Wicomico NAACP
Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility
Chispa MD
Climate Law & Policy Project

Maryland Poor Peoples Campaign
Labor for Sustainability
The Nature Conservancy
Clean Air Prince Georges
350 Baltimore
Maryland Environmental Health Network
Climate Stewards of Greater Annapolis
Talbot Rising
Adat Shalom Climate Action
Chesapeake Earth Holders
Climate Parents of Prince Georges
Echotopia
Maryland NAACP State Conference,
Environmental Justice Committee