



HB19 – Education - School Construction - Pedestrian Safety Plans (Safe Walk to School Act)

Testimony before

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee

April 5, 2022

Position: Favorable

Dear Finance Committee Members,

My name is Ruth Auerbach, and I represent the 750+ members of Indivisible Howard County. We are providing written testimony today to **support HB19**, to require pedestrian and cycling safety plans for new schools and to coincide with certain renovations of existing schools. Indivisible Howard County is an active member of the Maryland Legislative Coalition (with 30,000+ members). We are grateful for the leadership of Delegate Solomon for sponsoring this bill.

We enthusiastically support requirements for pedestrian and cycling plans for schools. According to a study by The National Center for Safe Routes to School, in 1969, 48% of children 5 to 14 years walked or bicycled to school, while in 2009, only 13% did. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has further found that, "Active school transport, such as walking or biking, increases physical activity levels, which has health and academic benefits for children."¹ Reducing automobile trips will also be beneficial for the environment. I personally have frequently found myself caught in traffic jams in front of elementary schools in Howard County. An increase in walking and cycling would alleviate this problem.

Thank you for your consideration of this important legislation.

We respectfully urge a favorable report on this bill.

Ruth Auerbach
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¹ Everett Jones S, Sliwa S. School Factors Associated With the Percentage of Students Who Walk or Bike to School, School Health Policies and Practices Study, 2014. Prev Chronic Dis 2016;13:150573.

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