

March 21, 2023

Members of the Maryland General Assembly,

I write to you as the parent of two elementary school students in Prince George's County to express my **strong opposition** to SB0011. My personal assessment of this legislation is based on my own experience gained through four years of serving as a PTO president and vice president and the negative impact it would have on the community I have dedicated years to representing.

Our school, Mount Rainier Elementary, has spent several years working to make walkability a top priority and core part of our school identity.

We were the first school in Maryland to register for National Walk Bike and Roll to School Day this coming May. Our Walk to School Days have been featured in the PGCPS Climate Change Action Plan and on local TV news. We have sponsored artwork to promote walkability and our school is in the middle of a months-long effort to work collaboratively with local officials, our local police department and school leadership to create safer routes to school and *strengthen* our school zone. **This legislation would make our students less safe - and undo years of progress.**

Mount Rainier Elementary is in the middle of a residential community, with many of our students living within walking distance. However, that walk to school is already too dangerous, including the main street leading to our school doubling as a favored route for commuters to cut through our residential neighborhood to avoid the heavier traffic of other major roads. This legislation would take away what little school zone protections our students do have - and those most disproportionately and negatively impacted by these changes would be our lowest-income families living in apartment buildings furthest from our school, and with the longest, most dangerous routes to walk.

SB0011's definition of a school zone may work for schools elsewhere in Maryland where most students arrive by car or bus, but **it is dangerous and potentially deadly** for schools like mine. This issue is too complex - and neighborhoods throughout the state too diverse - for a one-size-fits-all statewide policy.

I have watched testimony and past hearings on this legislation, and respectfully, Senate sponsor Snyder's personal dislike of speed cameras in *his* neighborhood is not a valid reason to put my children or the other families of *my school community* at risk.

If drivers do not like speeding tickets, the solution is simple: stop speeding. **Public policy should not reward drivers who can't be bothered to yield to a child in a crosswalk or follow basic speed limits around our schools - and it must not prioritize speeders over school and student safety.**

This debate should be about much more than traffic cameras. School zones are essential to creating safe routes to and from school for children as young as age four. This legislation includes a provision for traffic engineering studies, but those can be prohibitively expensive. Public policy should never put a price on what our children's safety is worth – and **public safety must not be available only to students living in neighborhoods affluent enough to afford it.**

Creating walkable, bikeable neighborhoods has an even greater value.

It creates a sense of community. It strengthens families who share time walking each morning – and friendships among those who walk together. It promotes exercise and better health. And if we are truly serious about taking the personal actions necessary to combat climate change, walking takes cars off the road, lowers emissions, and sets a positive example for our children. But local governments and schools like mine cannot do our job and incentivize more parents and students to walk if Annapolis takes away the tools we need to keep our streets safe.

Thank you for your consideration – and **I strongly urge you to oppose SB0011.**

Respectfully submitted,

Timothy Meyer
Mount Rainier, MD