

Robert Croslin
Mayor



Tracey E. Douglas
City Administrator

March 21, 2023

Committee: Senate Judicial Proceedings

Bill: SB 11 – Motor Vehicles – Speed Limits – School Zones

Position: Oppose

Reason for Position:

The City of Hyattsville's City Council voted to submit testimony in opposition to SB 11, a bill amending language for the establishment of school zones on March 20, 2023. Tying the use of speed cameras, an effective tool at changing driver behavior and reducing injuries, to very small zones around school grounds during school hours seems counterproductive to the State administration's goals of building walkable, sustainable communities.

Currently, school zones provide added layers of protection for students and families within a half mile of campuses. Most of our students and families commute to campus over greater distances than one half mile. A de facto reduction of these school zones to 500 feet represents a disservice to our communities and unnecessarily endangers students. While the amendment allows school zones up to the current maximum, it places undue time, logistical, and cost burdens on jurisdictions to maintain existing or establish school zones that are larger than a 500-foot radius, to ensure safe travel to and from school. A reduction in the school zones will result in greater danger for all students regardless of the mode they take to school; whether they walk, roll, drive, or ride the bus, this bill will make them less safe.

Speeds greater than 30 or 35 MPH are more likely to be deadly, so we must retain current school zones to maintain less deadly speed limits for those going to and from school, and traveling through school zones, given the higher concentration of drivers, pedestrians, cyclists, and others sharing these spaces. Speed zones are extensively signed, and jurisdictions also post camera locations online. It is not difficult to know where cameras are if one is paying attention as they should be, and drivers should heed posted speeds for the safety of others and themselves.

Prince George's county has the highest number of crashes in the state, and we cannot allow a reduction in safety measures such as school zones. Jurisdictions like DC and Montgomery County are enacting or proposing larger or enhanced school zones. Maryland should take their lead, not go backwards.

The City of Hyattsville urges the Committee to adopt an unfavorable report on Senate Bill 11. Please do not put the lives of children, parents, teachers, staff, crossing guards, and others at risk - please oppose SB 11.