

March 21, 2023

Dear MD House Environmental Committee, and my MD 22 Delegates Healey, Williams, and Martinez,

Thank you for your service to Maryland and District 22, where I live and vote.

I am writing to ask that you oppose SB011, which has a hearing in the environment and transportation committee on March 23rd. I understand Delegate Healey is on this committee, and that you can all influence the members' positions to return an unfavorable determination.

SB 011 would limit school zones to a 500-foot radius from the school unless a traffic study recommends otherwise, with a half-mile radius maximum, while retaining the 35 MPH maximum speed limit in the zone. I oppose SB 011, and any changes that reduce currently allowed school zones.

As you likely know, many children and families in our community walk and roll to school, in many cases traveling distances well over a half-mile (the current default school zone). The county does not provide bus service to students who live within 1.5 miles of their school, resulting in heavy foot, bike, and car traffic well outside of the current half-mile default school zone. We need to retain current school zone radii to help them get to and from school safely. As such, we should retain current law as is: allow school zones to be up to one-half mile radius from the school, without additional traffic studies or other justification.

SB 011 also would add undue time, logistical and cost burdens on jurisdictions to maintain current school zones that are larger than a 500-foot radius, in order to ensure safe travel to and from school. Our jurisdictions are still reeling from the pandemic and should not be asked to expend funds for a study to retain the current zone or change signage to reflect smaller zones.

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. Crashes at speeds greater than 30 or 35 MPH, are more likely to be deadly. Thus, we must retain current school zones with the 35 MPH maximum 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, cyclist, and others sharing these spaces.

The testimony for the Senate hearing of SB 011 was overwhelmingly opposed, with only two in favor - one being the sponsor. The two opponents focused on concerns about speed cameras, not safety considerations. The bill's sponsor has not adequately considered the negative effect on safety - on our children's lives - but is chiefly concerned about reducing speed camera tickets. Drivers have full power to reduce tickets by being responsible, noting the posted speed limit, and not speeding. 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.

Jurisdictions like DC and Montgomery County are enacting or proposing larger or enhanced school zones. Maryland should take their lead, not go backwards. Please do not put the lives of children, parents, teachers, staff, crossing guards, and others at risk - please oppose SB 011 and ask the committee to return an unfavorable determination.

thank you for considering my input.

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