



**Transportation
Alliance**



Bikemore

March 23, 2023

**Testimony on SB 11–
Motor Vehicles – Establishment of School Zones
Environment and Transportation**

Position: UNFAVORABLE

The Central Maryland Transportation Alliance and Bikemore oppose SB 11.

As introduced in the Senate, this bill would have shrunk school zones from 0.5 miles to 0.1 miles. Despite the amendments that appear to retain the 0.5-mile radius, the bill then goes on to limit school zones to just 500 feet unless a traffic study recommends otherwise. The amendments are superficial and have the same effect as the original bill.

Ensuring public safety is one of the highest priorities of the State and this includes safety on our streets and roads. Enforcing speed limits around schools is about protecting children from death and injury, and this bill is making a policy change that could have significant impacts to the safety of children. On this bill, the paramount concern should be the efficacy of speed cameras in saving lives and protecting children, not the impact on local revenues and the Transportation Trust Fund. However, the fiscal and policy note says nothing about safety.

Adding more restrictions to the school zone system would be counterproductive. Maryland already restricts the time when systems can be enforced to school days between 8 am and 6 pm. Other states are expanding enforcement. Last year, New York passed a law that expanded school zone enforcement in New York City to 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. For reference, New York's law defines a school zone radius as no more than 0.25 miles.

Reducing the radius so drastically will restrict the flexibility of local governments to place cameras where they are most appropriate and feasible while considering the local context and road conditions. There may be instances where a camera needs to be placed more than 500 feet away from a school. For example, in Baltimore City many elementary school children walk to school and the most dangerous road they cross could be blocks away from the school door.

We believe the committees should have the facts and data for Maryland's school zone safety program before making changes like the one proposed in this bill. For instance, a 2015 study from the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety found that Montgomery County's speed camera program "led to long-term changes in driver behavior and substantial reductions in deaths and injuries." It stands to reason that the program is similarly successful in other jurisdictions and this committee should know if reducing the radius will cause more deaths and injuries.

We respectfully request an unfavorable report.