

Committee: House Environment and Transportation Committee

Testimony on: Senate Bill 0011 - "Motor Vehicles - Speed Limits – School Zones"

Position: Favorable with Amendments (unfavorable without the amendment)

Hearing Date: January 25, 2023

Person Submitting: James G Titus, 6718 Glenn Dale Rd., Glenn Dale MD, 20769, jtitus@risingsea.net

BACKGROUND

Senator Sydnor told the Judicial Proceedings Committee that the motivation for the bill was speed cameras on a bridge on West University Parkway in Baltimore, and along US-40 where no child walks to school. His proposed solution was to codify the approach that the State Highway Administration (SHA) follows, so that Baltimore would follow the same rules that the counties follow. But unfortunately, Senate Bill has several unintended consequences.

PROBLEMS WITH SENATE BILL 11

- SB11 deauthorizes many school zones in counties and municipalities. SHA requires cameras to be within 500 feet of the school unless an analysis suggests otherwise. But most children do not live within 500 feet of the school. Localities place cameras wherever there is the greatest potential safety problem. which is not always on a road that even passes the school, let alone in front of a school.
- SB11 requires Baltimore to take actions that are currently not required in the counties because it applies to all roads, not just the roads that are similar to a state highway.
- Dozens of traffic studies are not practical for localities, which lack the resources of SHA whose roads carry more traffic and hence warrant more traffic studies.
- The bill unintentionally and unnecessarily diminishes school zones that do not have speed cameras, even though the only problems were with speed cameras. Under current law, §21-803.1 governs school zones in general, while §21-809(a) specifically defines school zones with speed cameras. Instead of amending §21-809(a), the bill amends §21-803.1, and thereby reduces the size of all school zones, most of which do not even have speed cameras.
- The bill has other drafting problems:
 - a. The effective date is too soon. It is not feasible for localities to assess which cameras would be deauthorized let alone conduct traffic studies by July 1, 2023.
 - b. The bill title is misleading. This bill does not establish school zones, it makes them smaller and eliminates some. Therefore, the title is very inaccurate.
 - c. The bill narrowly defines "school related activity" so that it no longer includes athletic or playground activities on school grounds. See §21-803.1(a)(4) in SB 11 as amended. counterintuitive definitions in a statute can cause problems later.

PROPOSED AMENDMENT

Because Senator Sydnor said that the goal was simply to codify SHA guidance so that Baltimore followed the same rules as the counties, I offer a 50-word addition to §21-809(a), which would do that, and nothing more. Under the amendment, the requirement for a traffic engineering study to justify cameras more than 500 feet from a school, would only applied to the US highways and state numbered routes. Such a codification of the SHA guidance would have no effect on the counties while only affecting highways in Baltimore that are equivalent to a state highway. School zones without speed cameras would be unaffected. It would also give agencies and extra three months to identify problematic school zones.

**ALTERNATE
TEXT FOR
SENATE BILL 11**

R5

3lr1082

(PRE-FILED)

By: **Senator Sydnor**

Requested: November 15, 2022

Introduced and read first time: January 11, 2023

Assigned to: Judicial Proceedings

Committee Report: Favorable with amendments

Senate action: Adopted

Read second time: February 15, 2023

CHAPTER _____

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Motor Vehicles – ~~Speed Limits~~ – Establishment of School Zones**

3 FOR the purpose of altering the radius around certain schools within which a school zone
4 may be established and speed monitoring systems may be placed and used, requiring
5 that such school zones be adjacent to a school, unless recommended by a traffic
engineering study;

6 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,

7 Article – Transportation

8 Section ~~21–803.1 and~~ 21–809(a)(7)

9 Annotated Code of Maryland

10 (2020 Replacement Volume and 2022 Supplement)

11 BY repealing and reenacting, without amendments,

12 Article – Transportation

13 Section 21–809(a)(1) , **(7), and (10)** and ~~(b)(1)(vi)2.~~

14 Annotated Code of Maryland

15 (2020 Replacement Volume and 2022 Supplement)

16 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,

17 That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.

sb0011

Article – Transportation

21–809.

(a) (1) In this section the following words have the meanings indicated.

(7) “School zone” means a designated roadway segment within up to a half mile radius of a school for any grades kindergarten through grade 12 where school related activity occurs, including:

(i) Travel by students to or from school on foot or by bicycle; or

(ii) The dropping off or picking up of students by school buses or other vehicles.

(10) NOTWITHSTANDING PARAGRAPH (7) OF THIS SUBSECTION, ON A STATE NUMBERED ROUTE OR A U.S. HIGHWAY, UNLESS OTHERWISE RECOMMENDED BY A TRAFFIC ENGINEERING STUDY, A SCHOOL ZONE:

(I) SHALL BE ADJACENT TO THE SCHOOL; AND

(II) MAY NOT EXCEED 500 FEET APPROACHING OR BEYOND THE SCHOOL BUILDING OR SCHOOL GROUNDS.

SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect ~~July 1~~ **OCTOBER 1, 2023.**

Approved: