

**Committee: Environment and Transportation**

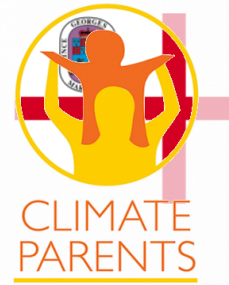
**Testimony on: SB 11 - "Motor Vehicles - Establishment of School Zones"**

**Organization: Climate Parents of Prince George's**

**Person Submitting: Joseph Jakuta, Lead Volunteer**

**Position: Unfavorable**

**Hearing Date: March 21, 2023**



Dear Mr. Chairman and Committee Members:

Thank you for considering our testimony in opposition to SB 11, which revises school zones. Climate Parents is a campaign to reduce climate change causing pollution in our schools, and our group is active in Prince George's County. In particular, we recently worked directly with Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS) technical staff and other advocates to develop a first in the national School Climate Change Action Plan.

In our work developing a Climate Change Action Plan for PGCPS, one of the main solutions to reducing vehicle emissions was to encourage more walking and biking to school. This is particularly important for students that live within the non-transportation areas, which are defined as being within 1½ mile for elementary school students and 2 miles for middle and high school students in Prince George's County. However, one of the barriers to walking and biking to school is feeling unsafe, which is largely due to dangerous driving. When students and their parents do not feel it is safe to get to school by other means, they drive independently, which results in more localized air pollution at the entrance of schools, more wasted time for parents, and more chances for vehicles-on-pedestrian collisions at schools.

SB0011 moves exactly in the wrong direction. Rather than trying to increase road safety by expanding school zones to match non-transportation areas between 1 ½ to 2 miles, it seeks to limit them to absurdly small sizes. This bill tries to make drivers less accountable for following Maryland laws and keeping our children safe on their way to and from school, while placing the decision to enforce traffic laws outside of these new tiny school zones in the hands of traffic engineers. This bill would take away numerous tools, most importantly speeding cameras and increased fines, while working to benefit scofflaws that do not follow Maryland's traffic laws.

We already have problems with pedestrian safety in Maryland. Pedestrian deaths in Maryland have remained stubbornly high since 2017. Given that drivers can already violate the law by speeding 12 miles per hour over the legal limit before being issued a camera ticket, this means these vehicles are in the range of being much more likely to cause a fatality (AAA finds that the chances of a pedestrian dying in an accident are 75% for a vehicle traveling 39 mph). To consider legislation that would hamper the ability to enforce traffic limits and thus increase the possibility of pedestrian deaths, specifically among students, is not a positive direction.

In the grand scheme of things, there should be no limit on the use of speed cameras in the state of Maryland. Drivers should have to follow Maryland's laws everywhere they go, but until the State Highway Administration (SHA) and the General Assembly stop coddling those that violate our laws, the least they could do is allow for greater enforcement when students are walking or biking to school.

In the Senate testimony on January 25, our public officials were laughing about how they would never see students walking on certain roads. That is because for decades the SHA has designed our roads to be completely unsafe for use by all Marylanders, especially children. The 9% of Marylander households without access to a car and the 100% of students under the age of 16 that cannot drive are just written off by the SHA and we for one are tired of our public officials thinking this is funny that our children should not be able to safely walk and bike to their schools.

We attached maps that show how school zones would be limited in many of our county around our 208 schools. We encourage an **UNFAVORABLE** report for this mistaken legislation.