

I oppose Senator Sydnor's bill SB0011 (Motor Vehicles – Speed Limits – School Zones). According to the Senator, the bill "is intended to improve school safety by modifying the definition of a school zone and requiring speed cameras to be placed closer to our schools". [1] The senator's thought is that reducing the school zone radius from 1/2 mile to 1/10 mile will force closer-in placement of speed cameras.

I very much appreciate the senator's intent, but there are better ways to achieve this goal. **Reducing** the school zone radius will allow for **higher** vehicle speeds on the **outer** portions of the school radius. But, school children will continue to walk in those portions, and this bill would expose them to those higher vehicle speeds.

Another unintentional downside of the senator's bill is that it would seem to run counter to Maryland's Vision Zero law. While the bill is obviously not intended to place more vulnerable road users at greater risk, it seems like that is what it would do, as it would open up more road miles to higher vehicle speeds during times of peak pedestrian use.

Instead of modifying section §21–803.1 to reduce the school zone radius, it could (and should) be modified to recommend the [many validated, safety-improving countermeasures](#) that can be employed on the streets near school zones, in addition to cameras, that would prove very effective at proactively slowing vehicle speeds. Also, a simple and straight-forward change that could (and should) be made to section §21–803.1 would be to reduce the maximum allowed speed (where a school crossing guard is posted, during the hours posted on signs) from 35 MPH to 20 MPH - a speed that is much safer for pedestrians.

There is no reason to modify section §21–809. While Maryland law allows for a 1/2 mile radius, the Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA), in typical practice, only employs a distance of 500 feet.

*Except in unusual circumstances and as justified by a traffic engineering study, a school zone adjacent to a school should not exceed 500 feet approaching or beyond the school or the school activity. Where that activity is a school crossing only, the school zone typically should end a short distance beyond the crossing. [2]*

As such, the SHA is already implementing the Senator's desired outcome. But, adopting the Senator's bill would mean closing off anything beyond 500 feet from the range of possibilities.

As currently constituted, I urge the committee to vote down this bill. Thank you for your time and attention.

Michael Scepaniak  
Co-president, [Strong Towns Baltimore](#)

[1] Sydnor, Charles. "January 2023 District Dispatch". January 9, 2023  
[https://www.charlessydnor3d.org/january\\_2023\\_district\\_dispatch](https://www.charlessydnor3d.org/january_2023_district_dispatch)

[2] Maryland State Highway Administration. "Automated Speed Enforcement School Zones". As of January 24, 2023 <https://roads.maryland.gov/mdotsha/pages/index.aspx?PageId=814>