



HB1360 – SCHOOL BUS TRANSITION – PROPANE-POWERED SCHOOL BUSES – GRANT PROGRAM, FUND, AND PURCHASE

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ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORTATION

SUPPORT

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Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS) supports **HB1360 – School Bus Transition – Propane-Powered School Buses – Grant Program, Fund, and Purchase**. This bill expands the Zero-Emission Vehicle Transition Grant Program to be the Zero-Emission Vehicle and Propane-Powered School Bus Transition Grant Program and expands the permissible use of funds to include the purchase of propane-powered school buses beginning in fiscal year 2030.

Local boards of education are responsible for providing funding for the transportation of students within their school systems. Over the years, local school system's responsibilities for transporting students have significantly increased due to additional costs associated with transporting special education, nonpublic placement, and homeless students. Operational expenses associated with fuel costs and labor shortages have also contributed to increased expenditure. Furthermore, in 2022, the Maryland General Assembly enacted the Climate Solutions Now Act which prohibits a county board of education from entering into a new contract for the purchase or use of a school bus that is not a zero-emissions vehicle beginning in fiscal year 2025.

Although the State provides some funding for transportation, this funding does not increase sufficiently from year to year to cover increasing enrollments as well as the increasing costs of obtaining and maintaining school buses. Additionally, the enactment of the Climate Solutions Now Act was not accompanied by funding to support the mandated transition to zero-emission school buses.

Local school systems are experiencing difficulties procuring electric buses to meet the mandate to transition to zero-emission school buses. AACPS appreciates the flexibility this bill provides as to the permissible types of vehicles that may be used to meet the requirements of the Climate Solutions Now Act. AACPS currently utilizes 65 propane powered buses. Per the United States Department of Energy, propane fuel has a lower carbon content than conventional gasoline and diesel fuel. This bill permits a reasonable alternative to zero-emission vehicles as school systems continue to pursue the goal of a complete transition to zero-emission vehicles.

Accordingly, AACPS respectfully requests a **FAVORABLE** committee report on HB1360.