

**Written Testimony Submitted for the Record to the
Maryland House of Delegates
Appropriations Committee**

Education-School Construction - Pedestrian Safety Plans (HB615)

February 25, 2020

SUPPORT

Maryland PTA is the state's oldest and largest child advocacy organization that serves as a powerful voice for all children, a relevant resource for families, schools and communities and a strong advocate for public education. We represent thousands of volunteer members in 900 public schools and we are comprised of families, students, teachers, administrators, and business as well as community leaders devoted to the educational success of children and family engagement in Maryland. For nearly 105 years, our mission has been to make every child's potential a reality by engaging and empowering families and communities to advocate for all children.

Maryland PTA submits this testimony in support of House Bill 615 ("HB 615"). This bill would require local school systems seeking state funds for the construction of a new school or additions to an existing school that would increase the capacity by more than 100 students to submit a pedestrian safety plan to the Interagency Commission on School Construction ("IAC"). The safety plan must:

- identify existing and potential safe routes for students to walk or bike to school;
- evaluate existing infrastructure, including sidewalks, along current and potential routes to determine if increased capacity is needed; and,
- provide an analysis of existing and potential school zones, including the need for expanding school zones on state and county roads.

Local schools systems would be required to submit documentation of public participation related to the safety plan including minutes from a public meeting.

Maryland's children are increasingly in danger when walking or biking to or from school. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, there was over a 3% increase in the number of pedestrians killed in traffic crashes in 2018, totaling 6,283 deaths -- the most since 1990. In 2017, a pedestrian was killed every 88 minutes.

The number of pedestrian fatalities continues to mount. According to the 2018 Maryland Pedestrian Safety Program Area Brief issued by the Motor Vehicles Administration, the overall number of pedestrian crashes and those resulting in injuries and/or fatalities have increased in Maryland over the past five years. Fatalities are high among pedestrian-involved crashes. Annually, Maryland drivers are involved in over 3,000 pedestrian crashes, and nearly 92% of those result in injury or death. Almost one

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in five people killed in Maryland in a traffic accident was a pedestrian. The fall season accounts for the highest number of total pedestrian crashes.

In 2018, two hundred fourteen (214) children were hurt walking to or from school. Many parents decide to drive their children to avoid the risk of an unsafe route to school. Intentional planning is a necessary step in improving the safety of our children. No parent should get a call that their child has been hit by a car. HB 615 will ensure that known risks along a child's route to school are reduced.

HB 615 complements HB 1, which prioritizes the idea of reasonable investments in safe, well-equipped, and sufficiently maintained school facilities, and Maryland PTA recommends a favorable report.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dr. Edna Harvin Battle
President