



February 26, 2020

The Honorable Anne Kaiser and Members  
Ways and Means Committee  
House Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

**Re: FWA – HB1008 – Child Abuse and Sexual Misconduct Prevention - Hiring Emergent Employees**

Dear Chair Kaiser and Members of the Committee:

The Maryland School Bus Contractors Association (MSBCA) supports with one amendment HB1008 – Child Abuse and Sexual Misconduct Prevention - Hiring Emergent Employees.

MSBCA serves as the voice of the private school bus companies that contract with local Maryland school systems in 18 of Maryland's 24 jurisdictions to own and operate the nearly 3500 contracted school buses that transport schoolchildren across the State. MSBCA remains committed to the safety of the students they transport and considers it a privilege to do so. The Association also remains committed to the position that the yellow school bus is by far the safest mode of transporting children to and from school. School buses have been demonstrated as the safest mode of transportation for many years, thanks to the manufacturers' dedication to passenger safety and responsible school bus contractors and drivers.

In addition to our commitment to vehicular safety, MSBCA is committed to ensuring the personal safety of each and every student we transport. All of our drivers must complete criminal background and fingerprint checks prior to employment and the vast majority of our buses are equipped with cameras that audiovisually record everything that occurs onboard the bus.

We support the intent of the bill last year to further ensure student safety by requiring additional background checks for all school employees and contractors and we appreciate the willingness of the sponsor to introduce HB1008 this year to make the requirements slightly less burdensome while not sacrificing student safety. That being said, we are asking for an amendment to create an exception allowing emergent employees to drive school buses equipped with audiovisual cameras that record the interior of the bus. Under the bill as introduced, emergent employees would not be permitted to drive a bus since they would, by nature of the job, be alone with the students they are transporting.

As many of you surely know, there is a national school bus driver shortage and Maryland is no exception. We are having an incredibly difficult time recruiting drivers and requiring them to wait additional time before driving after they have already passed criminal background and fingerprint checks is making it all the more difficult. Again, we in no way wish to compromise the safety of the students we transport. However, we believe that allowing these emergent employee drivers to drive school buses equipped with audiovisual cameras recording their actions does not compromise student safety and provides an additional layer of protection.

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***MSBCA serves as the voice of the private school bus companies that contract with local Maryland school systems in 18 of Maryland's 24 jurisdictions to own and operate the nearly 3500 school buses that transport schoolchildren across the State.***



**Again and in summary, we ask that you amend HB1008 to allow for emergent employees to drive school buses equipped with cameras that audiovisually record the interior of the bus and move favorable on the bill as amended.**

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

*Steve Nelson*

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