



LABOR NETWORK FOR SUSTAINABILITY

A PROJECT OF VOICES FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE, INC.

March 4, 2020

The Honorable Anne Kaiser
House Ways and Means Committee
Room 131, House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: HB1451- School Bus Purchasing – Zero-Emission Vehicle. Position: SUPPORT

Hon. Anne Kaiser:

The Labor Network for Sustainability (LNS) strongly supports HB 1451 requiring that each school bus purchased by a county board of education be a zero-emission vehicle, beginning October 2023 (2026 for contractors).

Nothing is more important than safeguarding the health and safety of our children. Emissions from diesel burning school buses pose a serious health risk to the 640,000 Maryland children who ride them. Diesel emissions are filled with carcinogens, particulate matter and soot that increases lifetime risk of cancer, incidents of asthma and heart disease. These effects are especially dangerous to children whose lungs, heart, and other organs are still developing.

For children, studies have shown that exposure levels to these harmful bus pollutants can be between four and ten times higher on school buses than in the surrounding environment. School bus drivers and maintenance employees are also adversely affected by breathing the toxic fumes emitted by diesel buses.

The only real solution to address the harmful pollutants emitted by diesel, propane and CNG buses is to transition to zero-emissions electric buses. Doing so would immediately reduce the toxic pollutants children, families and workers breathe every day.

Electric school buses also make economic sense. Diesel, propane and CNG buses have poor fuel efficiency and higher maintenance costs. Over the life span of a school bus, the lower cost of fuel and maintenance will save tens of thousands of dollars to school districts; money that can be spent on academic programs. When you add the economic benefits of electric school buses to the health benefits from reducing particulate matter, CO₂ and NO_x emissions, the case for electrifying school bus fleets is very clear.

Additionally, electric school bus technology is readily available today and is advancing daily. By delaying until 2023 the start of Maryland's transition, HB 1451 strikes the right balance between bold action, fiscal responsibility and acknowledgment of evolving technologies.

We also urge that HB 1451's ambitious requirements could and should be part of an overall state economic development plan. Procurement of electric buses and the necessary infrastructure should include incentives for creating high quality jobs in the state.



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Finally, we also urge the State and county school districts to ensure that proper training for school bus operators and maintenance employees is provided as part of the transition to cleaner, healthier zero emissions buses.

For these reasons, we urge the Committee to issue a favorable report on this legislation.

Joe Uehlein,
President,
Labor Network for Sustainability
juehlein@gmail.com

Elizabeth Bunn
Maryland State Director
Labor Network for Sustainability
ebunn@labor4sustainability.org