

BALTIMORE CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

BALTIMORE CITY BOARD OF SCHOOL COMMISSIONERS

Testimony of the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners In Support with Amendments House Bill 1055 Baltimore City – Maryland Transit Administration Transit Services for Public School Students

March 8, 2022

The Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners supports with amendments House Bill 1055 which provides for ridership on transit vehicles to any Baltimore City Public School student.

Unlike other school districts in the state, but similar to other urban school districts across the country, Baltimore City Public Schools (City Schools) uses the state transit system for students that must travel to school more than a mile from their homes. There are approximately 33,000 students eligible to ride Maryland Transit Authority (MTA) in City Schools. In 2017, legislation passed that allowed for MTA to provide ridership to eligible City School students for 5 years. The legislation has sunset. The need for the continuation of the funding is necessary, considering the chronic underfunding of City Schools.

The current Blueprint legislation, while delayed one year, will help with the chronic underfunding of City Schools because it recognizes concentration of poverty, but will not resolve all funding issues, as it is a 10 year plan and the school children had to forgo many resources over decades due to lack of funding.

When Consultants presented the final Adequacy Study Report to the Kirwan Commission in December 2016, the study revealed that Baltimore City Schools needed an additional \$358 million annually to ensure an adequate education for Baltimore's students. Similarly, an analysis conducted by the state's own Department of Legislative Services found during this same time period that if the inflation factor not been eliminated from the current education funding formula, an additional \$290 million per year would have been available to adequately educate Baltimore's children.

Under the current fee for service contract with MTA, students receive a nontransferable monthly pass which allows them to use MTA. The pass is called a One Card. Under the current contract with MTA, eligible students can ride from 5a.m. to 8 pm.

The proposed legislation would have a positive fiscal impact on City Schools. As drafted, it allows for approximately eligible Baltimore students to have hassle-free access to travel to and from school using MTA. Currently, an average of 22,000 use MTA daily.

As for the carpooling we ask that due to safety concerns and liability imposed by having a state and city sanctioned carpooling program that The State Department of Transportation and City Schools work together to report back to the General Assembly if a carpooling program can be administered and the report should consider any state, federal and local regulations and laws that may need to be modified or developed. The report shall be due to the General Assembly by December 31, 2022.

For the foregoing reasons, the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners supports House Bill 1055 with amendments and urges a favorable report.

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