

Chair Maggie McIntosh, Vice Chair Mark Chang and esteemed members of the House Appropriations Committee;

We are writing to request the committee issue a favorable report with amendments on House Bill 1056.

Baltimore City Public Schools students are the only students in the State of Maryland who rely on MTA public transit to get to and from school. It is incumbent on our state's leadership to ensure that MTA buses and trains get City Schools students to school safely and on time, just as students in other Maryland school districts are provided safe, reliable transportation to their schools.

Frequent, reliable, safe, and accessible transit is inextricably tied to the success of Baltimore's students and families, and yet access to transit in this city, like so many other things, is deeply inequitable, too often distributed along the expected lines of race and class.

For decades, the lack of reliable, frequent, and safe public transit has interfered with students' ability to access their education equitably.

[As cited in the Fund For Educational Excellence's report, Not in Service](#), students traveling to school today feel unsafe on transit, and late buses too frequently cause students to arrive late to school. This tardiness results in lost learning time and impacts student performance and academic standing in school. Additionally, many students pass up extracurricular opportunities like internships, jobs, sports, or clubs because they are concerned about traveling in the dark.

HB1056 renews SB 1149 Baltimore City – Maryland Transit Administration – Free Transit Services for Public School Students. This policy provides free ridership for eligible Baltimore City Public School students during certain hours and for specific activities. This program has benefitted Baltimore City Students, and we want to see it continue. However, we urge the committee to consider the challenges that students encountered in the implementation of the policy.

We consistently hear from students and families that the parameters attached to student transit passes are restrictive for students. Students with long commutes need the flexibility to ensure that their families need not worry about bearing the burden of alternative transportation like ride shares when buses don't arrive on time or when a student misses a bus.

Additionally, the restrictions make it difficult for students to access after school, weekend, and summer opportunities like internships, clubs, sports, and YouthWorks.

It is for these reasons that we urge the committee to amend the legislation and remove the time-based restrictions that prevent student access to transportation. We also believe students should have the option to access their free student transit pass on the MTA's digital CharmPass app, rather than a physical OneCard, removing an unnecessary barrier of authentication that prevents children from attending school.

School communities deserve to see tangible improvement in public transit safety, reliability, and efficiency.

It should be noted that, while we support these efforts, we also believe that our legislators should be bolder in their approach to eradicate transit barriers for our students. We need to elevate transformational change over incremental gains – especially for transit issues that have disadvantaged Baltimore City students for decades.

We ask that you consider our students and issue a favorable report with amendments on House Bill 1056.

With Urgency -

Natasha Escobar, Executive Chair
Baltimoreans for Educational Equity (BEE)

Roger Schulman, President and CEO
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Shamoyia Gardiner, Executive Director
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