



LABOR NETWORK FOR SUSTAINABILITY

A PROJECT OF VOICES FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE, INC.

Labor Network for Sustainability seeks to build a powerful labor-climate movement to secure an ecologically sustainable and economically just future where everyone can make a living on a living planet.

Committee: Finance

Testimony on SB 948: Public Utilities-Electric School Bus Pilot Program

Position: Favorable

Hearing Date: March 22, 2022

Dear Chairwoman Kelley and Members of the Committee:

The Labor Network for Sustainability supports SB948 and urges a favorable report.

SB 948 creates an Electric School Bus Pilot Program by which school districts in each utility service area will be eligible to purchase zero-emissions electric buses at no additional capital, administrative, or operational costs to the district. Maryland is already a leader in the conversion to emission free school buses. Several school districts in Maryland—including Montgomery, Howard, and Prince George's Counties—already own, or plan to purchase electric school buses. This program would expand the benefits of electric school buses to every school district in Maryland within the territory of an investor-owned utility.

There are compelling reasons to accelerate the conversion of diesel school buses to zero emissions vehicles. Studies have shown that diesel pollutants concentrate inside a bus cabin, increasing the exposure to children and operators. Diesel emissions are filled with carcinogens, particulate matter, and soot that increases the risk of a number of serious pulmonary and other diseases. SB 948 would take an important step in lowering the risk of chronic illnesses, like asthma. Diesel buses also harm our environment. They are a major source of greenhouse gas emissions and nitrogen oxide which contributes to acid rain, ozone formation, and smog.

SB948 is fiscally responsible. While the up-front purchase price of an electric school bus is higher than that of a diesel bus, those costs are coming down and the operating and maintenance costs are lower. The current price differential will be made up by the utility who will benefit from the Vehicle-to Grid technology provided by electric batteries.

SB948 also ensures that bus operators and maintenance employees will be trained on the new technology, thereby ensuring that the transition is smooth, just, and successful. It will be important for districts to work closely with their union partners in developing and implementing training programs.

SB948 is good for school children, school districts, school employees, and communities. The Labor Network for Sustainability urges a favorable report.

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