

March 21, 2022

## Testimony on SB 948 Public Utilities – Electric School Bus Pilot Program Finance Committee

## **Position: Favorable**

Moms Clean Air Force submits this testimony to express strong support for Senate Bill (SB) 948, which would require the state's Public Service Commission to implement and administer an electric school bus pilot. By passing this bill, Maryland would be furthering its environmental leadership and addressing harm to one of the state's most vulnerable populations - children.

Every day, our children ride approximately 7,200 diesel-powered school buses to and from school. Despite a significant push to electrify school buses, largely spearheaded by Montgomery County, Maryland still has only committed to electrifying 332 buses as of the end of 2021<sup>1</sup> - a small fraction of the polluting school buses on Maryland's roads. I know from personal experience that the reach of electric buses does not yet go far enough - my children go to elementary school in Montgomery County, and currently still ride dirty diesel buses every day.

The emissions emanating from these vehicles - which includes greenhouse gases, particulate matter, and nitrogen oxide emissions - present a staggering problem. Since school buses travel through residential communities, the pollution emitted from these tailpipes contributes significantly to respiratory and cardiovascular illnesses, among other diseases – in other words, the dirty air impacts health. Moreover, the primary users of these buses – children – are at greater risk than the general population. Given their still-developing lungs, children are more vulnerable to school bus emissions, which are 4-12 times higher in the cabin of the bus compared to ambient levels. In addition, wheelchair access is often closest to the tailpipe, putting children who may be even more vulnerable at an extra risk. And, children from low-income families, are more likely to be breathing in diesel exhaust from school buses.<sup>2</sup> Studies

<sup>1</sup> World Resources Institute, *The State of Electric School Bus Adoption in the US*, https://www.wri.org/insights/where-electric-school-buses-us.

have shown that a transition to clean school buses can result in fewer missed school days, as a result of reductions in lung inflammation and asthma episodes.

One need only look at the appended map, which shows rates of pediatric asthma in Baltimore, to see how dire the situation is for children in certain areas of the state; diesel buses are surely a contributor to those health impacts.

SB 948 can move the needle forward by requiring the formulation of a program that will reduce the upfront cost of electric buses, one of the predominant barriers preventing school districts from transitioning to zero-emission school buses. As well, providing fair payment for vehicle-to-grid services will bolster the lifetime savings of electric buses, bolstering the scalability of these vehicles. In other words, this bill can go a long way in ensuring our children are safe and healthy – and that we see increasing numbers of zero-emission school buses on the road. For the aforementioned reasons, Moms Clean Air Force urges a **favorable** report for Senate Bill 948.



## Appendix A: Childhood Asthma in Baltimore

- In Baltimore, nitrogen dioxide pollution contributes to more than 1,300 new childhood asthma cases every year.
- In some areas of the city, as many as 1 in 4 new childhood asthma cases are attributable to pollution
  across Baltimore, approximately 15% of cases, on average, are attributable to pollution.

## Map and estimates based on methodology described in:

SC Anenberg, A Mohegh, DL Goldberg, GH Kerr, M Brauer, K Burkart, P Hystad, A Larkin, S Wozniak, L Lamsal. Long-term trends in urban NO2 concentrations and associated paediatric asthma incidence: Estimates from global datasets. The Lancet Planetary Health Volume 6, Issue 1, 2022, Pages e49-e58. https://doi.org/10.1016/S2542-5196(21)00255-2.