



March 21, 2022

**Testimony on HB 53
Vehicle Laws – Dedicated Bus Lanes – Prohibition and Monitoring Systems**

Position: Favorable

The Fund for Educational Excellence supports HB 53, Vehicle Laws – Dedicated Bus Lanes – Prohibition and Monitoring Systems.

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. MTA buses and trains must 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. There are 29,000 Baltimore City Public School students, including 60% of high schoolers, using public transit to get to and from school. Baltimore City's transit systems have higher breakdown rates, less connectivity and lower reliability than the transit systems in most other major metropolitan areas. When considering this, it is likely not a coincidence that Baltimore City Public Schools students have a chronic absenteeism rate of 37%.

Frequent, reliable, 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.

School Choice was implemented in Baltimore City in 2005, and 16 years later has not reached its potential. Choice is designed to allow equitable access to quality schools for all students, allowing them to attend any public school within City limits. We have a system that families cannot take advantage of due to public transit deficiencies. This strategy cannot be effective if there is no robust transit system working in support of it.

School communities deserve to see tangible improvements in public transit accessibility, reliability, and efficiency. House Bill (HB53) will improve the reliability, speed and frequency and overall quality of MTA bus service by enforcing dedicated bus lane traffic laws. It will allow Baltimore City to implement study recommendations for enforcing existing dedicated bus lanes. It enables the use of automatic cameras to monitor traffic in dedicated bus lanes and allows local jurisdictions to issue civil citations no greater than \$100 to unauthorized vehicles driving in dedicated bus lanes.

School communities deserve to see tangible improvement in public transit access, reliability, and efficiency. Dedicated bus lanes function in a way that is similar to fixed rail: fewer stops, fewer interruptions or blockages, and therefore reduced travel time and better frequency.

We encourage a FAVORABLE report for this important legislation.



Sincerely,
Ruth Farfel

Ruth Farfel
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Fund for Educational Excellence