



SB095 Counties - Construction of Sidewalks and Crosswalks - Safe Alternative Routes to Public Schools

Friday, February 3, 2023

EDUCATION, HEALTH, & ENVIRONMENT

OPPOSE

Our names are Mara Babb, Subhashi Pradhan, Noor Chaudhry, and Julien Halleman, and we are students of Anne Arundel County and executive board members of the Chesapeake Regional Association of Student Councils (CRASC). We are writing in opposition to SB095 Counties - Construction of Sidewalks and Crosswalks - Safe Alternative Routes to Public Schools. If passed, this bill will require county boards of education to report on areas in which students are ineligible for transportation services and safe alternative routes to school. SB095 will also require each county to construct sidewalks and crosswalks to allow safe alternative routes to school for students who are ineligible for transportation.

This bill poses multiple challenges to county boards of education. It forces county boards of education to work with the governing body of a county, private owners of roads, and contractors to create alternative routes to schools including crosswalks and sidewalks. This is an inordinately burdensome process that would cost counties unnecessary time, money, and effort. This bill has a very limited perspective on each county's unique financial situations. It is extremely unrealistic to require counties to gather and report information every year on alternative routes to school while simultaneously working to create new sidewalks and pathways, propose and implement a budget, manage transportation, and implement the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. The roadwork alone would make it extremely difficult for students who require transportation to go to and from school.

This bill does not appreciate the expense of the time and labor required for constructing sidewalks for every school in the county. Construction on sidewalks and crosswalks around schools would worsen an already bad traffic problem in Anne Arundel County. There is no money allocated to general renovations or sidewalks and crosswalks in the 2023 Anne Arundel County budget. Without a clear budget for the proposed construction, building sidewalks, crosswalks, and bike paths in an expanded area around the schools would be an intense and costly initiative for counties. Furthermore, there is no enforcement mechanism outlined in the bill for counties taking too long to construct alternative routes and people that refuse to provide easements on their private roads.

The CRASC Legislative Department refers back to the following relevant clauses of the CRASC Platform:

- *CRASC Supports...* Adequate funding for different student programs within Anne Arundel County Public schools. (Plank 8, Clause B)
- *CRASC Supports...* The right to consistent and punctual county-provided transportation to and from school, including extracurricular activities, for students who require transportation. (Plank 7, Clause E)

Accordingly, CRASC respectfully requests a **UNFAVORABLE** committee report on SB095.

Respectfully Submitted,

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