



House Bill 849

School Bus Stops – Violations – Enforcement and Safety Measures

MACo Position: **OPPOSE**

To: Environment and Transportation
Committee

Date: February 23, 2023

From: Sarah Sample

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **OPPOSES** HB 849. This bill would require county law enforcement agencies to issue a warning instead of a citation for a certain school bus stop violation on state highways. This restriction involves only a violation that is recorded on a highway with four or more lanes by a vehicle traveling in the opposite direction of the school bus.

School bus monitoring systems have the distinct ability to capture violations by motor vehicles when they happen at dangerously close range to students, especially on state highways where the speed limits are higher than neighborhood streets. The great benefit of these programs is their ability to change behavior quickly and ensure that drivers exercise extreme caution when encountering a school bus. The civil fine that comes with these violations is a powerful mechanism to make sure residents abide by these laws.

A warning, without a civil fine, does not elicit the same response as when an actual penalty accompanies the violation. A first-time penalty is proven to drastically reduce recidivism rates immediately, advancing the true policy goal: safer roadways for students. Waiting for a second violation before applying a penalty leaves the possibility open for hundreds of thousands of drivers to make the mistake again, which simply serves to multiply the danger that students experience in these environments.

HB 849 would severely restrict the ability of counties to keep these bus stops safe and for this reason, MACo **OPPOSES** HB 849 and urges an **UNFAVORABLE** report.