



March 29, 2023

RE: HB 849

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Maryland Association of Pupil Transportation (MAPT). MAPT members are student transportation experts, many of whom are local Student Transportation Directors and Supervisors. As such MAPT expresses opposition to HB 849 – School Bus Stops – Violations – Enforcement and Safety Measures.

Students loading and unloading at bus stop is the most dangerous event that occurs on a regular basis during the school day. HB 849 would create confusion for motorists as to when to stop for the school bus and sends the wrong message, which could result in deadly consequences.

This legislation would require law enforcement to provide a warning to the motorists for a first violation in a certain situation on the roadway. The communication of this legislation would confuse motorists and encourage drivers to illegally pass the school bus if they know they will not be cited. The simple answer to not receiving a violation is to stop for the bus.

The premise of all school bus stop enforcement programs is to curb the number of violations at the bus stop and promote student safety. It should be noted that student safety would be compromised if this bill passes. Not issuing a violation for a first offense sends a message that the safety of our students is not of the utmost importance. It prioritizes the driver who is illegally passing the bus over the safety of children.

While we sympathize with the information presented by the Delegate and the challenges noted in their specific area, other measures to address those specific issues should be looked at in ways that do not jeopardize student safety. Perhaps putting in place electronic signs to warn motorists that they are required to stop for the school bus in this area or other warning signs that there is a “school bus stop ahead” would ensure that motorists are encouraged to stop for the bus. There are alternatives to solve the concern brought forward that would not endanger students.

All it takes is one time for a motorist to not pay attention or to think “they will only get a warning” for a fatality to happen. Any legislation that does anything other than fully support enforcement of illegal passing of school buses puts the lives of our students at risk.

Protecting our children on the roadway should be first and foremost.

We ask that you oppose this legislation and vote NO.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Cathy Bendis", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Cathy E. Bendis

Director of Transportation, Harford County Public Schools

MAPT President 2021 - 2022