



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

Marc Elrich  
County Executive

March 29, 2023

TO: The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr.  
Chair, Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Marc Elrich  
County Executive

RE: House Bill 849, *School Bus Stops – Violations – Enforcement and Safety Measures*  
OPPOSE

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House Bill 849, *School Bus Stops – Violations – Enforcement and Safety Measures*, would require a law enforcement agency to issue a warning rather than a citation for a first violation captured by a school bus camera of a motorist passing a stopped school bus with its lights flashing while the motorist was traveling in the opposite direction of a multi-lane divided highway with no physical median (e.g., grass, dirt, concrete, etc.). A motorist committing a second or subsequent violation captured by a school bus monitoring camera would be mailed a \$250 citation. The bill would also require the State Highway Administration, in consultation with law enforcement agencies, to identify school bus stops on State highways in Montgomery County that have high incidences of these violations, and to develop a plan for implementing additional safety measures at those locations that would include the construction of solid medians. The bill would take effect on July 1, 2023.

All of Montgomery County's school buses are equipped with automated enforcement cameras. Looking at the numbers, that's 1,401 school buses transporting children to schools across the County using State and local roads that can be simple and uncongested two-lane roads to complex and heavily traveled multi-lane divided and undivided highways. Montgomery County's automated school bus camera program, Cross Safe, improves school bus safety, and under State law, strictly holds motorists accountable for their driving. While the school system strives to provide efficient school bus routes and safe and convenient school bus stop locations, school bus camera footage has demonstrated that children are unpredictable, and that near misses involving motorists and students are not uncommon, and therefore, demand a significant penalty.

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In a December 2022 report to the Maryland General Assembly, Montgomery County reported a less than 10% repeat offender rate for motorists who received a citation for passing a stopped school bus with flashing lights in the opposite direction of a multi-lane roadway with no solid median. This finding shows that the high citation, which was approved by the General Assembly in 2019, is working effectively to deter distracted and reckless driving on Maryland's roadways.

I would urge that the Committee adopt an unfavorable report on HB 849.