

2024 JCRC SB 528- Income Tax - Credit for Student

Uploaded by: Ashlie Bagwell

Position: FAV



**Testimony in SUPPORT of *Senate Bill 528 – Income Tax –
Credit for Student Bus Transportation Expenses*
Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
February 1, 2024**

The Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Washington (JCRC) serves as the public affairs and community relations arm of the Jewish community. We represent over 100 Jewish organizations and synagogues throughout Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia. The JCRC is strongly committed to cultivating a society based on freedom, justice, and pluralism. We work tirelessly throughout the entire Greater Washington area to advocate for our agencies that serve the most vulnerable residents, support our Jewish day schools and community centers, and to campaign for important policy interests on behalf of the entire Jewish community and all Marylanders.

The JCRC has a long tradition of advocating on behalf of families who enroll their children in Jewish Day Schools. Given our commitment to these students and the need to help allay the burdensome tuition cost of these nonpublic schools, we support Senate Bill 528. The Bill will allow an individual resident who is a parent or guardian of a school student to claim a credit against the state income tax in an equal amount to the bus transportation expenses paid or incurred by the resident during the taxable year on behalf of the student. SB 528 also stipulates that the credit may not exceed \$1500 per student and that the school must participate in the nonpublic schools textbook and technology grants program.

Paying for school bus transportation is an extremely expensive option for many families and therefore out of reach, particularly for families with multiple children. Some parents spend up to three hours per day in the car because of the need to do multiple round trips to accommodate different dismissal times for students of different ages. SB 528 would not only help offset the high cost of bus transportation, but also reduce traffic congestion, cut pollution, and make the roads safer for all. For these reasons, we ask the committee to support SB 528.

MD Catholic Conference_SB 528_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Garrett O'Day

Position: FAV



MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

January 31, 2024

SB 528

Income Tax - Credit for Nonpublic School Student Bus Transportation Expenses

**Senate Budget & Taxation Committee
Position: FAVORABLE**

The Maryland Catholic Conference offers this testimony in support of Senate Bill 528. The Catholic Conference is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals and numerous charities combine to form our state's second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government. We offer this testimony on behalf of the families of more than 50,000 students served by over 150 PreK-12 Catholic schools in Maryland.

Senate Bill 528 would provide nonpublic school families with a refundable credit against the State income tax for qualified bus transportation expenses incurred on behalf of a school student. The transportation expenses must be paid to a school or school system for daily bus transportation to and from school. The bill, as written, is limited only to bus transportation. The maximum value of the credit provided by Senate Bill 528 would be \$1,500 per student. This is approximately in line with the average per child cost to parents for chartering school buses for the school year.

Each year, the Conference places great emphasis on and supports legislation in the areas of the environment and care for our common home, access to education for low and middle-income students, and the dignity of work and access to employment. At times, legislation proposed by the Generally Assembly positively intertwines several areas of care and concern to the Conference and this is one of those examples.

This legislation would be good for our environment, lessening the carbon footprint of potentially thousands of extra vehicles statewide in transporting students to school by shared transportation. Additionally, this bill will provide greater access to work, freeing parents up for different shifts, or earlier or later workdays, allowing them to better organize their work and parenting schedules.

Lastly, Maryland's Catholic schools serve tens of thousands of lower and middle-income families, and they are not provided busing through the State of Maryland, as they do in many other states. This bill would act to make organized school transportation affordable for those families. It is for these reasons that we ask for a favorable report on Senate Bill 528.

SB 528 FINAL WR Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Giavante Hawkins

Position: FAV



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Executive Director

To: Budget and Taxation

From: The Maryland Society of Accounting and Tax Professionals

Re: SB 528

Contact Person: Giavante' Hawkins

Position: IN FAVOR

Income Tax- Credit for Nonpublic School Student Bus Transportation Expenses

On behalf of the Maryland Society of Accounting and Tax Professionals (MSATP), representing over 2,000 tax professionals serving hundreds of thousands of Maryland taxpayers, I write in support of Senate Bill 528 creating a tax credit subsidizing student transportation costs to nonpublic schools.

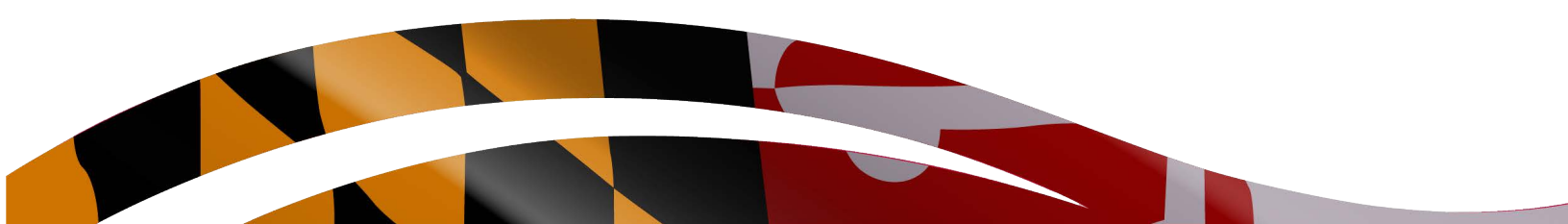
Our members frequently aid parents in navigating tough choices, balancing their children's education options relative to the financial planning constraints confronting households. While public systems deliver quality instruction, diverse private academies catering to specialized needs or beliefs strengthen communities, offering alternative paths that uphold foundational liberties.

However, the freedom of selecting certain schools expecting cultural familiarity or rigor around particular worldviews becomes hollow if attendance remains un-affordable, especially for working families without public transit access. Senate Bill 528 recognizes that transportation represents real barriers for some, and provides relief through, a \$1500 credit defray busing costs.

As accountants guiding clients on maximizing education resources, we appreciate inventive policies supporting parental priorities. The MSATP urges your favorable consideration of Senate Bill 528; helping those who sacrificed to pursue educational pluralism, we all benefit.

Thank you for your consideration.

Giavante Hawkins



J Prero Testimony on SB 528.docx (2024).pdf

Uploaded by: Judah Prero

Position: FAV

Maryland General Assembly
Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
January 31, 2024

SB 528

FAVORABLE

Submitted by Judah Prero, Esq., Arnold & Porter Kaye Scholer LLP

Chair Guzzone, Vice Chair Rosapepe, and members of the Budget and Taxation Committee. My name is Judah Prero, and I am a resident of Baltimore City who has been engaged in the practice of environmental law for over two decades. I have also worked together with schools and organizations in my community, including Agudah Maryland, Maryland CAPE, and others.

I appreciate the opportunity to testify today and look forward to additional opportunities to provide information to the Legislature on how the use of school buses can mitigate against traffic conditions that result in air pollution.

I speak today in support of SB 528 – concerning the credit for student bus transportation expenses. This bill is just one of a number of bills being heard today that look to incentivize actions that are beneficial to health and the environment.

This bill has personal significance to me. I have been involved in matters related to the environmental issues stemming from transportation for over a decade. Earlier in my career, I served as a Maryland State Assistant Attorney General both under Attorneys General Curran and Gansler. My client was the Maryland Department of the Environment, and I was the counsel for MDE's Mobile Source program in the Air and Radiation Management Administration – the division that deals with the air pollution impact of cars, trucks, buses - mobile sources. As a parent of ten children, I observed over the years how private school parents in the area of Baltimore in which I live spend considerable time on a daily basis carpooling or simply driving their own children to and from school. School buses have not been a viable option.

A large segment of the community in which I live in northwest Baltimore City and in the Pikesville area send their children to parochial schools. The main schools that service this community are generally not located within walking distance of the residences. Consequently, carpooling is routine for families with school-aged children. However, because of the large amount – and growing number - of children attending school, and the distance of the school from the residences, large numbers of full size and mini vans are on the road every day. The carpools travel on main arterial roads, such as Reisterstown Road and Park Heights Avenue, in the area of on- and off- ramps to the Baltimore Beltway, usually during rush hour periods. This creates a situation where the increased amount of vehicles on the roads simultaneously can lead to congestion, which results in slower moving cars and therefore a greater amount of tailpipe emissions. It appears that even with ridesharing/carpooling, the issue of traffic congestion which results in degraded air quality is apparent.

Observing this, I, along with community representatives, met with MDE's Mobile Source division to present some of the facts about the pupil transportation issue, specifically in the Pikesville/ Northwest Baltimore City area. The environmental professionals at MDE agreed that there was an air quality and congestion issue stemming from cars and vans being used for pupil transportation. Reducing the

amount of cars on the road, which would in turn relieve traffic congestions, would address this issue. That can be done through the use of school buses. I am sure this is not a situation unique to my area.

The reasons for why utilization of organized school buses posed a challenge in the past have been economic in nature – and, as others testifying today will explain, it is a challenge that can be addressed with the incentives contained in this bill. I want to emphatically express my belief that promoting mass pupil transit can have environmental and health benefits that accrue to all Marylanders. The expenditure is a worthwhile investment. Accordingly, it's my hope that the General Assembly passes Senate Bill 528.

Thank you for your consideration.

2024-SB0528-Income Tax-T4BL-FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Nicholas Marks

Position: FAV



SB 528: Income Tax - Credit for Nonpublic School Student Bus Transportation
Expenses
Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
Terps For Bike Lanes – FAVORABLE

February 1, 2024

Chair Rosapepe and Committee Members,

We are writing this testimony in support of SB528. Terps for Bike Lanes is an organization dedicated to enhancing bicycle infrastructure in and around UMD, with a focus on creating a safe and inclusive environment. Terps For Bike Lanes is dedicated to promoting sustainable and alternative transportation methods, including biking. While our primary focus is on creating a bike-friendly environment, we understand the importance of diverse transportation options for all students. SB0528 aligns with our values of promoting accessible and efficient transportation for Maryland residents.

We appreciate the provisions within SB0528 that aim to assist parents or guardians by offering a refundable credit against the State income tax for nonpublic school student bus transportation expenses. This initiative recognizes the financial burden faced by families in providing transportation for their children attending nonpublic schools.

It is noteworthy that SB0528 places a reasonable cap on the tax credit, ensuring fiscal responsibility while still providing meaningful assistance to parents and guardians. We believe that this legislation strikes a balance between supporting families and maintaining fiscal prudence.

While Terps For Bike Lanes primarily advocates for biking and sustainable transportation, we recognize the importance of a comprehensive approach to address the diverse needs of Maryland residents. SB0528 reflects a positive step in this direction by acknowledging the transportation expenses incurred by families with students in nonpublic schools.

Sincerely,

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Agudah testimony - HB528 student bus- FAV - 2024.p

Uploaded by: Rabbi Ariel Sadwin

Position: FAV



SENATE BUDGET AND TAXATION COMMITTEE

JANUARY 31, 2024

SENATE BILL 528

INCOME TAX – CREDIT FOR NONPUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENT BUS TRANSPORTATION EXPENSES

**TESTIMONY OF RABBI ARIEL SADWIN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, AGUDATH ISRAEL OF MARYLAND**

SUPPORT

Agudath Israel of Maryland speaks on behalf of the Orthodox Jewish communities across Maryland, and on behalf of the 10,000 students attending 30 Jewish day schools in our great state.

Senate Bill 528 follows the recommendations issued by the Nonpublic School Transportation Task Force based on research conducted this past year, in which a comprehensive study of school transportation options was pursued. After many hours of research studying a variety of options, the Task Force concluded that a tax credit model incentivizing the usage of busing would be the best method of pursuing progress for nonpublic school student transit, thus reducing the environmental and congestion impacts of student transportation. Agudath Israel of Maryland issues this testimony in support of Senate Bill 528, for the following reasons:

- **SAFETY** The swell of vehicles on the community roads during carpool rush hour results in traffic delays and frequent instances of fender-benders. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, students are 70 times more likely to get to school safely when taking a school bus instead of traveling by car, as buses are heavier and distribute crash forces differently than cars, in addition to being equipped with bright lights, large mirrors, and stop-sign arms ([source](#)). Making school busing a viable option would protect both children and other commuters. Additionally, children walking to school are vulnerable to hate and other types of crimes, while allowing them to go via school bus provides a layer of security.
- **ECONOMIC EQUITY IMPACT** A recent survey conducted by Agudah of Maryland of over 750 Baltimore families with children in Jewish day schools found that over three quarters of parents find themselves forced to carpool or hire paid drivers to send their children to school. Roughly seventy percent of the respondents said that the strain of ineffective school transportation has caused significant stress in their life, and a majority of respondents added that transportation costs (such as gas, wear-and-tear on vehicles, and the necessity to purchase a large vehicle to accommodate the carpool) is a significant strain on their family budgets, and that they had experienced employment challenges due to the issue. This bill would provide peace of mind and economic relief to struggling families as they deal with the difficulties of transportation, and would allow more parents (particularly women) to enter the job market by freeing them from the constraints of driving to school.
- **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT** Every day, hundreds of minivans, SUVs, and other high-occupancy vehicles clog the roads as carpools ferry their children to school. Making school busing a viable option for these families would be a huge step in reducing our state's emissions

and would be a tremendously impactful step in meeting the existential challenge of climate change. Given that Maryland school buses are transitioning to be electrically-powered, the impact of replacing hundreds of private vehicles with a fleet of electric buses would drastically reduce the environmental impact of school transportation.

CONCLUSION A General Assembly report ([source](#)) found that local school systems in our state spent \$637.3 million on student transportation services in fiscal 2018 alone, with per pupil student transportation costs exceeding \$1,000 in several counties. Expanding school bus availability would provide economic benefits, environmental benefits, and safety benefits, and advance the cause of equity.

Please issue a FAVORABLE report on **SB 528**.

SB528 BJC Fav Bus tax credit.pdf

Uploaded by: Sarah Miicke

Position: FAV

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WRITTEN TESTIMONY

**Senate Bill 528 - Income Tax - Credit for Nonpublic School Student Bus
 Transportation Expenses**

Budget and Taxation Committee

January 31, 2024

SUPPORT

Background: Senate Bill 528, (SB528) would establish a refundable income tax credit for parents for the cost of daily bus transportation for their child to or from a nonpublic school that participates in the Nonpublic Schools Textbook and Technology Grants Program. The maximum value of the tax credit would be \$1,500 per a student. SB528 comes from the *Task Force to Study Nonpublic Student Bus Transportation* which recommended that the state provide an income tax credit to help cover the cost of student transportation.

Written Comments: The Baltimore Jewish Council supports excellence in education. Area Jewish Day schools educate more than 8,000 students. Many of these students walk to school every day on busy roads, including Park Heights Avenue, because they do not have access to other transportation. This is a serious safety issue, not only because young children are walking on unsafe streets, but because many of these children are visibly Jewish. There have unfortunately been incidents of hate crimes and hate bias incidents in our community on roads like Park Heights Avenue where Jewish people have been both verbally and physically assaulted. The BJC is concerned about the sudden and extreme increase in antisemitism and the potential safety implications it has for visibly Jewish students walking to school. SB528 would help provide a safe transportation option for students in our community.

Further, The Baltimore Jewish Council and The Associated Jewish Community Federation of Baltimore are committed to repairing our world. We represent The Pearlstone Center in Reisterstown, MD, a conference center and farm that employs and teaches sustainable practices. If enacted, SB528 would mean fewer cars on the road, and less stalling in front of school and wasted gas, all of which would have a positive impact on the environment.

For these reasons, the Baltimore Jewish Council asks for a favorable report on SB528.

The Baltimore Jewish Council, a coalition of central Maryland Jewish organizations and congregations, advocates at all levels of government, on a variety of social welfare, economic and religious concerns, to protect and promote the interests of the Associated Jewish Community Federation of Baltimore, its agencies and the Greater Baltimore Jewish community.

BALTIMORE JEWISH COUNCIL

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SB528_Hettleman_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Shelly Hettleman

Position: FAV

SHELLY HETTLEMAN
Legislative District 11
Baltimore County

Judicial Proceedings Committee

Joint Committee on Children, Youth,
and Families

Joint Committee on the Chesapeake
and Atlantic Coastal Bays Critical Area



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TESTIMONY OF SENATOR SHELLY HETTLEMAN
SB528 INCOME TAX- CREDIT FOR NONPUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENT
BUS TRANSPORTATION EXPENSES

During the 2023 legislative session, the General Assembly passed HB 486, Task Force to Study Nonpublic Student Bus Transportation, enabling a task force to study nonpublic student bus transportation. The task force's goal was to reduce traffic congestion and reduce the environmental impact of personal vehicles utilized for school transportation.

I was a task force participant and we were charged with examining all current forms of transportation that students take to get to and from school, collect data and information from each local board of education, consider other methods of travel for nonpublic students, and to provide recommendations on how to reduce the number of students in private vehicles.

For the 2022 school year, there were roughly 834 private schools serving 139,263 students in Maryland. (MSAR#14844, 2023) The State does not provide any funding for the transportation of private school students (outside of grants provided to LEAs for the transportation of students with a disability.) Parents must either provide transportation for the student or, if the school provides, pay an additional amount to receive bus transportation.

Parents of private school students either must provide transportation or pay for transportation that is provided by the school. Many private schools either do not have the ability to build a transportation program, do not have enough interest from families, or recognize that a transportation program would add such an additional cost to families that it would not be sustainable.

Many of the students that are attending private schools are riding in personal vehicles with family members, resulting in a high number of students being driven to and from school daily which dramatically increases the amount of traffic and thus congestion on the state's highways and roads. The additional pollution caused by these personal vehicles could be greatly reduced if students were consolidated into a multi-passenger vehicle, such as a school bus or are incentivized to carpool.

Students may also walk to school along sidewalks and roadways, causing pedestrian safety concerns. These students may be at a heightened risk for targeting as they wear traditional clothing, hats, headcoverings, or other religious symbols.

SB528 would create a tax credit for parents for daily bus transportation to and from school, with a maximum credit of \$1500 per student. Eligible schools include schools that participate in the nonpublic school textbook and technology program, ensuring that the lowest tuition schools only are included. This bill supports families who want their children to travel to school safely and will help our state reduce the number of cars on the road and decrease our carbon footprint.

I urge a favorable report on SB528. Thank you.

SB 528 Transportation Testimony Arielle Frankston-

Uploaded by: Tom Bond

Position: FAV

January 31, 2024
SB 528
Income Tax – Credit for Nonpublic School Student Bus Transportation
Senate Budget and Tax Committee
Position: Support

Arielle Frankston-Morris, Teach Coalition

Each morning and afternoon, kids pile in and out of cars, arriving at and leaving school. When carpool is the predominant method for school transportation, we are left with a system that is unsafe for children, harmful to the environment, overwhelming to roadways, and disruptive to caretaker work schedules. As you know, Maryland has dozens of tax credit programs, including the Employer Commuter Tax credit which encourages commuters to switch from cars to buses, trains, bikes and more... resulting in safer, less congested, more environmentally-conscious commutes. Maryland has already taken this first step to get cars off the road at peak commuter times. A tax credit enabling more parents to use school buses carries this further.

The Nonpublic School Transportation Task Force arrived at this policy proposal with the input of stakeholders from all sectors. Children are safer when driven on buses as opposed to hundreds of car driving on the same roads. And at a time of significantly heightened caution for many communities, namely those targeted for Hate Crimes, more organized and monitored movement of children is called for. Tens or even hundreds of cars line up in front of schools and children hop out of each one, a constant stream. Bus transportation is a much shorter and better monitored process, therefore, a safer process. I respectfully urge Maryland to partner in making every effort to keep children safe.

This proposed school bus transportation tax credit would put school bus transportation in the reach of more parents in the state, keeping children safe, lowering emissions, alleviating traffic, and making otherwise carpool driving adults better able to maintain optimal work schedules.

I urge the committee to vote favorably on SB 528.