

**SB200\_MD Youth Advisory Council\_Fav.pdf**

Uploaded by: Alexander Hossainkhail

Position: FAV



Maryland Youth Advisory Council  
c/o Governor's Office of Crime  
Prevention, Youth, and Victim Services  
100 Community Place,  
Crownsville, MD 21032

Grace Minakowski, *Chair*  
Will O'Donnell, *Vice-Chair*  
Folashade Epebinu, *Secretary*

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February 7, 2024

**Re: SB 200** | Counties - Construction of Sidewalks and Crosswalks - Safe Alternative Routes to Public Schools

Dear Chair Feldman and Members of the Education, Energy, and Environment Committee,

The Maryland Youth Advisory Council prides itself on being a coalition of diverse young advocates and leaders who serve as a voice for youth in the state of Maryland. As leaders in our communities, and as appointees of the Governor, President of the Senate, Speaker of the House, Maryland Association of Student Councils, Maryland Higher Education Commission and the University System of Maryland, we take every opportunity to address relevant issues by influencing legislation, spreading public awareness and serving as a liaison between youth and policymakers regarding issues facing youth.

Students in Maryland have the right to arrive safely to their schools, regardless of where they live. For students in rural or remote areas, access to transportation can be unreliable, hindering said students from reaching their full academic potential. As a result, many families must look to alternative transportation routes when getting their children to school—disproportionately affecting low-income families.<sup>1</sup> When considering the risk of pedestrian fatality, it is critical that Maryland communities are designed with adequate sidewalks, footpaths, and bike lanes in which students are not at risk of being injured. Research shows that accidents and fatalities regarding students traveling to school are higher than ever, with approximately 800 school-age children dying each year, and over 150,000 being injured during school-time travel.<sup>2</sup> In addition, utilizing safe, non-road paths instead of a car or bus can improve the physical health of students choosing to walk/cycle, as well as having positive impacts on the environment.<sup>3</sup>

**SB 200** requires each county board of education to identify accessible pathways for students to travel to school via safe alternative paths including; sidewalks, footpaths, crosswalks, and bike paths. These pathways are intended for students assigned to a public school and located in an area that is ineligible for transportation services. The pathways report will also include requests to construct new safe routes, and

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<sup>1</sup>“2009 Poverty Status of Selected Groups.” 2014. Federal Highway Administration.  
<https://nhts.ornl.gov/briefs/PovertyBrief.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup>“The Relative Risks of School Travel: A National Perspective and Guidance for Local Community Risk Assessment | Blurbs New | Blurbs | Main.” 2014. [www.trb.org](http://www.trb.org). Transportation Research Board. February 30, 2014.  
<https://www.trb.org/Main/Blurbs/161028.aspx>.

<sup>3</sup> Perno, Joseph. 2023. “The Advantages of Walking to School.” [www.hopkinsmedicine.org](http://www.hopkinsmedicine.org). Johns Hopkins Medicine. April 28, 2023.  
<https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/wellness-and-prevention/the-advantages-of-walking-to-school>.

the county governing body shall develop a plan to meet the needs identified in board reports. The Council supports **SB 200**, as it aligns with the Council's Legislative Platform supporting:

- a. Advocating for proactive measures that the safety of youth and students (Article IV. Health And Social Issues; Clause F), and;
- b. Supporting initiatives designed to promote the physical and social well-being of Maryland Youth (Article IV. Health And Social Issues; Clause P).

**SB 200** represents a pivotal step towards ensuring the safety and well-being of Maryland's students, embodying a commitment made by the general assembly, demonstrated through previous legislation, to foster environments where youth can thrive academically and physically. By pushing for the development of healthier, sustainable, inclusive, and safer communities, we support the educational journey of every student of Maryland, while at the same time protecting their futures. For these reasons, the Council supports **SB 200** and respectfully requests a favorable report from the committee. We thank you for your consideration of our position.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G. Minakowski', written in a cursive style.

Grace Minakowski, Chair  
Maryland Youth Advisory Council

# **SB200. The Arc Maryland. Support.pdf**

Uploaded by: Ande Kolp

Position: FAV



## **EDUCATION, ENERGY, AND THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE**

### **SB 200: Counties – Construction of Sidewalks and Crosswalks – Safe Alternative Routes to Public Schools February 7, 2024 Position: Support**

The Arc Maryland is a statewide advocacy and service organization that works to protect and advance the rights and quality of life of people with disabilities.

We support SB 200 as we believe that students of all abilities should have access to safe and accessible routes to school, and those routes should be posted by schools, available to families for practice with their children, prior to each school year.

This past school year, in Howard County in particular, the beginning of the school year bus transportation was abysmal. Students were either not picked up or were picked up but returned home hours later than expected. While this problem is mostly resolved, it illustrated the overreliance we have on school provided transportation.<sup>i</sup> Some students absolutely need bus transportation to attend school, either as a part of their Individualized Education Program or because of their proximity to school, but there are many students who would and could walk or independently travel to school if they had access to, and knowledge of, safe and accessible routes to school.

In community master plans for the creation of safe, alternative routes to school, we hope there is a considerate lens on accessibility of those routes. Accessible routes bring communities together and can be used by all: students in wheelchairs, students who have difficulty walking with terrain un-evenness, and families with children in strollers.

The United States Department of Transportation has several helpful resources in the Safe Routes to School Program Guide.<sup>ii</sup> Their website includes information on the health and environmental benefits of creating safe routes to schools. As we look to the future, reducing reliance on vehicles as a part of our clean air approaches, and promoting more active community design for overall health and wellness, this bill makes sense. We encourage a favorable report from the committee on SB 200.

For more information, please contact:

Ande Kolp, Executive Director, The Arc Maryland [akolp@thearcmd.org](mailto:akolp@thearcmd.org)

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<sup>i</sup> <https://www.wypr.org/the-baltimore-banner/2023-11-27/inside-howard-countys-school-bus-crisis-everything-that-went-wrong-before-zums-launch>

<sup>ii</sup> <https://www.transportation.gov/mission/health/Safe-Routes-to-School-Programs>

# **SB 200 Signed Testimony.pdf**

Uploaded by: Arthur Ellis

Position: FAV

ARTHUR ELLIS, CPA  
*Legislative District 28*  
Charles County

ASSISTANT DEPUTY MAJORITY LEADER

Finance Committee

*Senate Chair*  
Joint Committee on the  
Management of Public Funds

Chair, Charles, St. Mary's and Calvert  
Counties' Senate Delegation



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February 6, 2024

**Testimony of Senator Arthur Ellis in Support of Senate Bill 200: Counties - Construction of Sidewalks and Crosswalks - Safe Alternative Routes to Public Schools**

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and the Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

Senate Bill 200 is a reintroduction from the 2023 legislative session, and requires a county board of education each year to prepare and post to the county's website a report that identifies pathways that public school students may use to travel to school using only safe alternative routes under certain circumstances; requires the governing body of a county each year to review a certain report and construct any sidewalks and crosswalks necessary to create safe alternative routes for public school students under certain circumstances.

I urge your favorable report on Senate Bill 200.

Yours in Service,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Arthur Ellis".

Arthur Ellis – District 28

# **SB0200 - Safe Alternative Routes to Public Schools**

Uploaded by: Joseph Jakuta

Position: FWA



**Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment**  
**Testimony on: SB 200 - "Safe Alternative Routes to Public Schools"**  
**Organization: Climate Parents of Prince George's**  
**Person Submitting: Joseph Jakuta, Lead Volunteer**  
**Position: Favorable, with Amendment**  
**Hearing Date: February 7, 2024**



Dear Mr. Chairman and Committee Members:

Thank you for considering our testimony to SB 200, "Safe Alternative Routes to Public Schools." Climate Parents is a campaign to reduce climate change-causing pollution in our schools, and our group is active in Prince George's County. In particular, we recently worked directly with Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS) technical staff and other advocates to develop a first in the national School Climate Change Action Plan.

In our work developing a Climate Change Action Plan for PGCPS, one of the main solutions to reducing vehicle emissions was to encourage more walking and biking to school. This is particularly important for students that live within the non-transportation areas, which are defined as being within 1½ mile for elementary school students and 2 miles for middle and high school students in Prince George's County.<sup>1</sup> However, one of the barriers to walking and biking to school is feeling unsafe, which is largely due to dangerous driving. When students and their parents do not feel it is safe to get to school by other means, they drive independently, which results in more localized air pollution at the entrance of schools, more wasted time for parents, and more chances for vehicles-on-pedestrian collisions at schools.

In Prince George's County, we know firsthand the tragedy that comes when students walking to school are not kept safe. In November 2023, two of our students were killed in a crosswalk by a driver as they walked to school. While this particular legislation will likely not have prevented that specific tragedy, there are numerous close calls every day on the roads that would be affected by this legislation.

We are supportive of this approach of requiring annual examinations of safe routes to schools and to require counties to implement missing sidewalks necessary to create safe routes to schools. This will be a positive step towards making walking to school safer for students. However, several areas of improvement are needed in this legislation to more holistically solve this:

1. The legislation also needs to require the look at crossing guards as well and require counties to provide funding for crossing guards deemed necessary in the report.
2. There needs to be a requirement that all reports are approved by a state body, most likely the State Board of Education, so as to avoid counties simply issuing reports that find no infrastructure improvements are needed.
3. An article needs to be added to Transportation similar to what is being proposed in Local Government § 12-506.1 (C) that would require implementation by the State Highway Administration (SHA). Over half of the schools in Prince George's County have a state highway within 500 feet of the school grounds and numerous schools are built so that their entrances are directly on state highways. There will be no

hope of having safe routes to school if County officials need to plead with the SHA to make the roads they manage safe for students. This of course does not remove the need to keep § 12–506.1 (D) for roads under municipal control, but for this legislation to achieve the goals it strives for, SHA must be mandated to follow the recommendations in the plans.

We do applaud that this legislation has been brought forward. We cannot live sustainably if our students cannot access their places of learning by safely walking or biking there. Each student that does not have access to LEA provided transportation should be able to get to school safely. We need a stronger version of this bill to put Maryland on the path towards that reality.

We encourage a FAVORABLE report, with AMENDMENT, for this important legislation.

**SB0200-EEE\_MACo\_OPP.pdf**

Uploaded by: Brianna January

Position: UNF



## Senate Bill 200

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

MACo Position: **OPPOSE**

To: Education, Energy, and the Environment  
Committee

Date: February 7, 2024

From: Brianna January

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **OPPOSES** SB 200. While well-intentioned, this bill would place a costly mandate on county governments to carry out new state policies to create sidewalks and crosswalks as alternative routes for all public school students. **MACo does not raise policy objections to the bill's goal of ensuring safe routes for students – county concerns are merely practical and cost-driven.**

As a rule, MACo resists state policies that result in costly or burdensome local implementation. SB 200 would implement a costly, logistically difficult mandate for counties to implement. The 2023 fiscal note for that year's version of this bill highlighted several counties in which this proposal would be extremely costly to execute: Baltimore County "anticipates substantial construction costs for sidewalks and crosswalks under the bill," Montgomery County "expects significant additional costs under the bill," to the tune of almost \$90 million in the 2023 estimate, and Frederick County would anticipate "purchasing additional buses and hiring additional bus drivers under the bill."

Additionally, the route to school may not be subject to just the jurisdiction of the county, as municipal or State-owned roadways may compose part, or even all, of the route. This bill unfairly requires counties to develop a plan with the controller of the road and re-direct county resources to construct sidewalks and crosswalks on roads not owned by the county.

Furthermore, the one-size-fits-all mandate of SB 200 simply does not fit the transportation and geographic realities of Maryland counties. Counties – and schools – face diverse geographic challenges, transportation laws (like rights-of-way), and community characteristics that would make it difficult, if not impossible, to apply SB 200 to all 24 jurisdictions.

Under state law, counties would have no choice but to fund the significant costs associated with SB 200 – competing for limited local funds against education, school construction, public safety, and other essential public services.

Counties agree with the merit of SB 200 and that the information it seeks to collect is important in understanding the needs of Maryland students, but this legislation goes too far in mandating county resources of an unknown amount, all while neglecting the logistical capacities of counties to implement it. For this reason, MACo **OPPOSES** SB 200 and urges an **UNFAVORABLE** report.

# **SB 200.Sidewalks and Crosswalks Safe Routes.pdf**

Uploaded by: John Woolums

Position: UNF

**BILL:** Senate Bill 200  
**TITLE:** Counties - Construction of Sidewalks and Crosswalks -  
Safe Alternative Routes to Public Schools  
**DATE:** February 7, 2024  
**POSITION:** OPPOSE  
**COMMITTEE:** Education, Energy, and the Environment  
**CONTACT:** John R. Woolums, Esq.

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE), representing all of the state's local boards of education, opposes Senate Bill 200 to require each local school board to annually prepare a report on safe alternative routes to public schools and impose a mandate on local governments to construct sidewalks in accordance with the report.

MABE places a high priority on student safety, especially in the daily transportation to and from school of nearly 900,000 students each school day. The arrival and departure of many of these students is within proximity of schools in which bus services are not provided. For these students, local school systems have adopted policies and procedures to ensure that safe routes to and from school are available.

Generally, getting students to and from school safely is a partnership between the home and the school. Each local school system provides parents with educational information and resources on pedestrian and bus safety in addition to the training and resources provided to students. Parents are primarily responsible for identifying the appropriate walk route from home to school or the bus stop, with school systems providing information and recommendations to assist them in identifying an appropriate walking route for their children.

MABE appreciates the intended benefit of this legislation in enhancing the opportunity for local governments to access available state and federal funding to construct sidewalks and crosswalks in order to improve the quality and safety of routes to and from school. However, this bill would impose an immediate and substantial burden on each local school system to identify such routes and the needed improvements as defined in the bill, while calling on local governments to fund the construction of sidewalks and crosswalks on county roads and develop plans to address school routes involving state roads and other roads not under the local government's control. In these ways, the bill would impose an immediate burden of additional liability for local school systems without a reasonable assurance that the identified needs would be addressed in a timely manner through costly infrastructure projects by our state and local funding authorities.

For these reasons, MABE requests an unfavorable report on Senate Bill 200.