

BILL: House Bill 356
TITLE: School Bus Stops – Monitoring Cameras and Safety Measures
DATE: February 8, 2024
POSITION: OPPOSE
COMMITTEE: Environment and Transportation
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The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) opposes House Bill 356.

MABE opposes House Bill 356 because it would dramatically reduce the critically important enforcement of violations by drivers passing school buses loading and unloading students. The bill would apply to instances in which a driver on a road with four or more lanes approaches and passes a school bus which is stopped and loading or unloading students in the opposite lane. The bill would mandate that all first-time violators of the law prohibiting this reckless behavior receive a warning rather than a citation and fine. Local school systems firmly believe that drivers on multi-lane roads without a median should continue to be held responsible for stopping and waiting for buses to load and unload students.

House Bill 356 would detract from the abilities of school systems and local law enforcement agencies to protect the health and welfare of Maryland's most precious resource, our students. In 2011, MABE strongly supported enacting a new law to authorize a law enforcement agency, in consultation with a local board of education, to place school bus monitoring cameras on local school buses. This law has empowered local law enforcement agencies to issue warnings or citations not to exceed \$250 to vehicle owners or drivers for failing to stop for a school vehicle that has stopped with its alternately flashing red lights operating in accordance with the Maryland Vehicle Law. As every driver should know, buses stopped for these purposes employ alternately flashing lights, and extending stop signs, and yet the numbers of drivers failing to stop in response to these obvious warnings are consistently alarming. The legislature has chosen to increase the maximum fine from \$250 to \$500 to strengthen the law to further enhance student safety.

MABE represents 24 local boards of education with a unified commitment to ensuring student safety in all school-related activities, and especially school bus safety. MABE opposes this bill because it would significantly weaken the enforcement tools available to local law enforcement agencies to respond to unsafe driving in close proximity to school buses clearly engaged in the loading and unloading of students.

For these reasons, MABE urges an unfavorable report on House Bill 356.