



January 28, 2025

Re: HB200 | Workgroup to Study School Bus Safety (Maryland School Bus Safety Act of 2025)

Dear Chair Korman and the Environment and Transportation Committee,

The Washington County Association of Student Councils (WCASC) is a coalition of high school and middle school student councils dedicated to amplifying the voices of thousands of students within Washington County Public Schools. WCASC strives to create connections among those within the community, providing students access to avenues in which they can become more civically involved at the local level. The mission of WCASC is to elevate the collective student voice by building communities of student leaders, giving students agency to speak their truth, and inspiring students to take action.

WCASC is in support of **HB 200 – Workgroup to Study School Bus Safety (Maryland School Bus Safety Act of 2025)** – and urges the Environment and Transportation Committee to give a favorable report on this bill.

HB 200 authorizes the governor to appoint workgroup members to study and identify issues related to safety on school buses. Students are directly affected by how safe school buses are. The US Departments of Education and Transportation specifically highlight the correlation between safe, accessible, and reliable transportation with the attendance of students¹. By providing safer transportation as developed by the workgroup, school attendance can increase and benefit the greater good of the student-aged populations. By fostering these safe environments, it can only benefit the students.

Through the creation of the workgroup under **HB 200**, an environment of collaboration is promoted, using input from people of all walks of life when it comes to school bus safety. This ensures that the transportation systems provided by school systems are properly inclusive and equitable to students who come from different socioeconomic backgrounds. Although some schools may try to foster diversity through the reassignment of school districts, as described by *The Kids on the Bus: The Academic Consequences of Diversity-Driven School Reassignments*, certain parents may deliberately place their children in another school based on perceived status². This exemplifies how even today, not all schools will have the same issues -- let alone when it comes to school bus transportation. By creating a more diverse group of representatives to speak on behalf of students, all people will deepen their perspectives on the transportation of students, and fully understand the capacity that student safety takes when it comes to comfort on public transportation like a yellow school bus service.

¹US Department of Transportation, and US Department of Education. "Fact Sheet: Bolstering Daily School Attendance Through Safe, Accessible, Reliable Transportation." [transit.dot.gov](https://www.transit.dot.gov/sites/fta.dot.gov/files/2024-09/Fact-Sheet-Bolstering-Daily-School-Attendance-Through-Transportation.pdf), September 2024, <https://www.transit.dot.gov/sites/fta.dot.gov/files/2024-09/Fact-Sheet-Bolstering-Daily-School-Attendance-Through-Transportation.pdf>. Accessed 26 January 2024.

²Domina, Thurston, et al. "The Kids on the Bus: The Academic Consequences of Diversity-Driven School Reassignments." PubMed Central, 2022, <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9286063/#S4>. Accessed 28 January 2025.

The overall development of the workgroup described in **HB 200** can seriously impact the communities in which the yellow school bus services are for. By encouraging the safety of school buses and the collaboration of local government to promote this growth -- **HB 200** supports the well-being of the families within the communities that the buses serve, and allows for trust to be developed in regards to school safety. According to a sample of 1,000 parents, 67% viewed school safety as a critical concern within their school systems³. The only way to combat these fears is by thoroughly informing and educating parents on ways that school safety is ever-changing in the current school environment, and by allowing for input to be made on safety measures present within their own communities -- which is how the workgroup can benefit the greater community. The findings within the groups will lead to targeted responses to the safety concerns presented by members, and will strengthen local infrastructure surrounding the local transportation systems.

WCASC has chosen to support **HB 200** due to its resonance with the ideals present within our platform. The belief on regard to school safety within our platform states that:

1. We support: “Measures and policies that are created to uphold school safety.” (WCASC Legislative platform Plank IV, B, 1), and
2. We support: “Fair, reasonable, and ethical discipline of students.” (WCASC Legislative platform Plank IV, B, 3)

HB 200 as a whole deeply stands with our purpose as an organization: collaboration for the greater good for all students. School safety is an issue important to many, especially due to the threats prevalent now that have previously been rendered impossible. Through the collaboration of the workgroup, actionable problems will be identified and addressed within the school busing system, which will ultimately benefit the environment for all students. With the support of this bill -- a stronger community bond, a collaborative environment reflective of the diversity within our school districts, and safer school buses can all be accomplished. All of these reasons are why the support of this bill is so imperative to the daily life of the average student, and why WCASC stands strongly in support of this bill. Thank you for considering the effects this legislation will have on our communities.

Sincerely,



Barna Begzad
President, Washington County Association of Student Councils

³Security Staff. “Safety plans determine parents' and teachers' trust in schools.” Security, 2023, <https://www.securitymagazine.com/articles/99736-safety-plans-determine-parents-and-teachers-trust-in-schools>. Accessed 27 January 2024.