

February 28, 2025

HB0811: Counties – Construction of Sidewalks and Crosswalks – Safe Alternative Routes to Public Schools

Chair Korman and members of the Environment and Transportation Committee,

I support HB0811, which would require counties' board of education to identify pathways that public school students may use to travel to school as well as review and construct safe alternative routes for the students.

Even in neighborhoods where speed limits have been reduced to 20 MPH, my everyday experience shows that many drivers are not paying attention and looking out for pedestrians, including school aged children walking to and from school. Parents and children are scared by these reckless drivers who then opt to drive their students to school due to perceived safety concerns."

The CDC has documented why having safe routes to school are so important:

- Schools have direct contact with more than 95% of U.S. youth, aged 5–17 years, for 6 hours a day¹.
- Schools influence 13 critical years of students' social, psychological, physical, and intellectual development¹.
- Schools promote students' health and safety by helping them establish lifelong health patterns¹.
- Healthy students are better learners, and academic achievement bears a lifetime of benefits for health¹.

If not for the safety on our roads, we need to build complete streets throughout our neighborhoods to connect schools, libraries, and community centers for the benefit of our state's health. We know that when adults maintain a healthy lifestyle, medical costs can decrease around \$2500 per year². So let's create safe walking paths for our students to form healthy habits that will benefit them the rest of their lives.

I urge a favorable reading from the committee so that HB0811 can be brought to the House floor for a vote.

Sincerely,

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¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/healthy-schools/about/index.html>

² <https://bmjopensem.bmj.com/content/7/1/e001038>