

Name: Christopher Fryman  
Organization: None  
Bill: HB200  
Type: Informative Testimony

Greetings Maryland Environmental and Transportation Committee,

The purpose of this testimony is to provide information to the committee on an overdue and most urgent issue related to an oversight with your legislative processes and school bus safety. Last year, I sent emails and received confirmation of receipt to not only this Committee, but also the Senate Judicial Committee, Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee, and others on issues with your school bus safety laws. The analysis went into great detail on problems and solutions found within your laws and the structuring of, what I call, legislative entrapments. HB200 was the only bill presented during this legislative session that deals with the safety of students on school buses (aside from seat belts) and I felt as though this was the most appropriate place to push this testimony. Delegate Mangione's prior testimonies on similar bills for the Workgroup to Study School Bus Safety (Maryland School Bus Safety Act of 2025) seem to focus on interior issues. The Workgroup, with the assistance of the Maryland Department of Transportation, should also be tasked to immediately make changes on the following exterior issues.

It should be noted that I am not against the use of cameras on the interior or exterior of a school bus. Over the past five years, the Maryland General Assembly has, at the request of school board organizations, law enforcement organizations, and private companies pushed for the use of school bus cameras to cite people for illegally passing a school bus. What this State and ALL other States overlooked prior to passing their camera laws, was to adjust, update, improve upon, and codify already existing school bus safety procedures found within the current Maryland Commercial Drivers License (CDL) Manual, specifically, section 10.2.1. Maryland Transportation Code 22-228 (d) requires that a school bus only need to give 100 ft of alternating flashing amber lights, followed by an immediate deployment of the red lights (creating a citation field) when the school bus comes to rest position (source: see attached chart). However, the Maryland CDL Manual 10.2.1 has 4 critical points to note: 1. Place flashing amber lights on for 200 ft (or State Code), 2. bring the school bus to a stop and set the break, **3. ENGAGE RED LIGHTS AND DEPLOY STOP-ARM WHEN VEHICLES ARE A SAFE DISTANCE.** 4. Only open doors for loading or unloading when all vehicle have come to a stop. From my research, this is the most difficult, and possibly most impossible standard set in any State Code in the United States on school bus operations. The immediate adjustment of Maryland Transportation Code 22-228 (d) to reflect the Maryland CDL Manual 10.2.1 will help give vehicles the perception reaction time needed to react to the school bus, possibly help prevent sudden stop accidents, and prevent a false sense of safety for children when it comes to the immediate deployment of the school bus stop-arm.

Maryland Law 21-706.1, to the best of my knowledge, does not protect a citizen from risking points off their license, court costs, or a guilty ruling from being reported to their insurance where a dramatic increase in rate might happen, if a judge decided to rule to the letter of the law, rather than the spirit, and can dramatically increase your fine. As stated before, the mechanics of the law can legislatively entrap a driver into a violation. Alleged violators are more apt to pay the citation having it disappear than to contest it. Pennsylvania now offers a no-cost virtual hearing with PennDOT on disputing a ticket before bringing in the cost. PA Title 75 SEC 3345.1 also protects from points off your license and being reported to insurance in the contesting of the civil penalty.

Maryland Law 22-706 (c) requires that a driver stops for the school bus unless there is a divided highway. Several States (CA, WA, ID, WY, SD, IA, MO, IL, KY, OH, SC) require that a driver does not need to stop for a school bus while on the approach if there are 4 or more lanes of traffic (source: DOT HS 813 603, US DOT, NHTSA). This will help with keeping a driver's center vision focused on the hazards in front of them and not offset to their immediate right or left. Adding this would require you to supplement your school bus operation laws (legislate a safe environment) with restrictions on how and where the school buses pick up children to include the prevention of children crossing certain types of roads, and use of traffic crossing guards similar to Delegate Moon's bill, etc.

I cannot stress how important the utilization of the Maryland Department of Transportation's (MDOT) Civil Engineers and Traffic Signals Technicians are in solving these safety issues. Please feel free to reach out with any questions you may have and thank-you for you time and attention on this important safety issue.