



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

MEMORANDUM

Date: February 14, 2024  
From: Deni Taveras, Maryland State Delegate, District 47B  
To: Environment and Transportation Committee  
Ways and Means Committee  
Stakeholders  
Re: HB 134 - Motor Vehicles - School Buses - Seat Belts (Clarification on Seat Belt Implementation in HB134)

During today's testimony before the Environment and Transportation Committee, Vice Chair Regina Boyce raised an important question regarding the status of buses currently in operation that do not have seat belts. While retrofitting is an option, I want to clarify our actual approach under HB134.

Under current Maryland law, all operating school buses must be replaced every **12-15 years**. HB134 aligns with this existing replacement cycle, ensuring that **newly purchased buses** will come equipped with seat belts rather than requiring costly retrofitting of existing buses.

**Key Considerations:**

- **Cost Prohibitive:** Retrofitting seat belts into existing buses would place a significant financial burden on local school systems. The fiscal note for the version of this bill introduced in **2024 (HB196)** estimated that retrofitting would cost **\$115 million over three years**, making it an unsustainable approach.
- **Warranty Concerns:** Installing seat belts in existing buses requires removing and reinstalling seats, which **voids the bus manufacturer's warranty**—a critical issue for school systems that rely on these warranties for safety and maintenance.

Our goal remains clear: to improve student safety by ensuring that all **newly acquired** school buses meet modern safety standards and are equipped with seat belts from the outset.

We ask and urge a favorable report on HB134.