



03-03-2025

Ways and Means Committee
Delegate Vanessa E. Atterbeary
130 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland, 21401

RE: HB1359 – Charles County – Student Bus Transportation Providers – Provider Displacement - SUPPORT

Dear Committee Chair Delegate Vanessa E. Atterbeary,

The Charles County Chamber of Commerce is a business advocacy organization with over 500 members. Our Legislative Committee has reviewed HB1359 and has voted to support the proposed legislation.

On behalf of the Charles County Chamber of Commerce, it is our pleasure to express the Chamber's Support of HB1359, "Charles County – Student Bus Transportation Providers – Provider Displacement."

HB1359 protects our small local businesses by providing sufficient notice to Local School Bus Contractors should the Board of Education determine to provide student transportation services that result in the displacement of a current School Bus Contractor. This notice is balanced with appropriate safeguards that protect the Board of Education and the public.

HB1359 represents the collective work and agreement of our State Delegation, Charles County Commissioners and local businesses. HB1359 is an example of what can be accomplished when government and business work together. More importantly, it is an important acknowledgment of the substantial investment these 24 small locally owned businesses make and risk they take when they invest in their business and the community.

The Board of Education requires Bus Contractors to purchase buses which are manufactured according to the Board's specifications. The buses are financed over a period of years, the term of which exceeds the term of the contract between the Board and the Contractor. Lenders require the Contractors to pledge their homes as security for bus acquisitions. In the event the Board determines the bring School Bus Transportation in-house, the Contractor cannot simply contract with a neighboring jurisdiction as these jurisdictions have different specifications. Thus, the Contractor is at risk of being left liable for an unusable asset.

HB1359 is about equity and balance. It enables and balances the needs of the Board of Education (Should the Board decide to bring student transportation in-house,) while enabling and balancing the needs of the private business (to develop a financial exit strategy and develop an employee transition plan). These 24 businesses employ over 380 bus drivers, attendants and support personnel, own and operate over 280 buses and serve over 28,000 students. They are vital to the local economy, at a time when growing private enterprise is crucial to Maryland's success.

Charles County Chamber of Commerce
303 Charles Street, Suite 100 | La Plata, MD 20646
(301) 932-6500 | info@charlescountychamber.org



For these reasons, we therefore, respectfully request that your committee give this bill a favorable report.

The Chamber commends the Delegation and the County Commissioners for their proactive, forward-thinking action. Please do not hesitate to contact the Chamber, should you require additional information.

Sincerely,

Kathy Guzman, President & CEO
Charles County Chamber of Commerce

Natonya Thomas, Board Chair
Charles County Chamber of Commerce

CC: Delegate Jheanelle K. Wilkins, Vice Chair, Ways and Means Committee
Delegate Edith J. Patterson
Delegate Debra M. Davis
Delegate C.T. Wilson
Delegate Kevin M. Harris
Senator Arthur C. Ellis
Senator Michael A. Jackson