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Legislative District 13
Howard County

Government, Labor, and
Elections Committee

Subcommittees

Election Law

Labor

Oversight Committee on Personnel



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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

March 6, 2026

To: The Honorable Kriselda Valderrama
Chair of Economic Matters Committee

From: Delegate Jen Terrasa
District 13, Howard County

Re: Sponsor testimony in Support of HB 1296, Preliminary Subdivision and Site Plans
– Safe School Route Reports – Requirements

Dear Chair Valderrama, Vice Chair Charkoudian, and the members of the Economic Matters Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to present HB 1296, which is a bill about making sure our children are safe on their way to school.

BACKGROUND

When school boards make decisions about routes to school and bus eligibility, parents of non-bus riders need to independently determine the safest route for their children to get to school. Some families quickly find that there are no safe pathways for their children to walk to school, forcing children to walk along the side of busy roads or cross busy intersections. Or they have to find a ride.

PROBLEM

Committee members may recall a horrific incident that happened in Prince George's County in November 2023 when a truck struck and killed two children who were walking to Riverdale Elementary School. Nationally, nearly 800 school-age children lose their lives each year, and over 150,000 are injured on their way to school, according to the National Academies Transportation Research Board. These numbers underscore the urgent need for robust pedestrian infrastructure that can protect our children and reduce these devastating statistics.

SOLUTION

Before a new housing development is approved, decision makers should have a good idea of what life will be like for the potential residents who will live in that community. It's likely that school-aged children will live there at some point and how they will get to school should be part of that deliberation.

HB 1296 will require developers to prepare and submit a report on safe routes to school as part of a preliminary subdivision or site plan if the residential development project is located within walking distance of a school. The bill's proposed reports would include the identification and assessment of hazards along routes to school, and make developers coordinate with local Education Boards and Maryland Department of Transportation to mitigate those hazards. If hazards exist, developers will have to propose mitigation measures including construction of new infrastructure.

I have another bill this Session, HB 394, that addresses safe school routes after the communities are already built.

CONCLUSION

Finding a safe way to walk to school should not be an afterthought. HB 1296 plays an important role in making sure our children get to school safely.

I respectfully urge a favorable report.