



February 2, 2026
Senator Brian Feldman
Chair, Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Letter of Support
SB 071 Interjurisdictional Safe Pathways Commission - Establishment

Dear Chair Feldman and Members of the Committee,

As a board member representing over 2,000 architects, on behalf of AIA Maryland, I write to express strong support of Senate Bill 071, which proposes establishing the Interjurisdictional Safe Pathways Commission to identify, coordinate, and secure funding for safe pathways for students traveling to and from school. AIA recognizes the value of quality planning and built environment, providing safe routes to school is a very important aspect of community planning and it needs to be carefully considered in the larger context of building effective communities. Additionally, from my personal experience, I recognize that being able to ride my bike to school for 7 years of primary education was a positive experience and an effective aspect of building stronger communities.

This bill requires the formation of a commission to inventory safe pathways to school, identify gaps, evaluate funding, develop a strategic plan, recommend policies, identify funding and foster engagement in planning/developing such pathways. Unfortunately, the vast majority of students in our public school systems arrive at school in a car or bus. Research review of a number of studies reflects on benefits from having safe routes to schools. A summary captured in "Active Living Research" summarizes information from several studies that indicate actively commuting to and from school could improve mental and physical health of students, it can lower transportation costs for school districts and families, and it can provide generational benefits extending well beyond those for students of primary school age.

Buildings can have a positive impact on health and wellness when planned properly, enabling formation of this commission may help us to think a little deeper before building anew, and assess communities for improvement for buildings in place. Thoughtful placement of buildings and walkable paths provide a greater percentage of the population with the ability to arrive at school of their own means, and this active living discourages sedentary lifestyles helping to establish healthy behaviors that are more likely to continue into adulthood.

AIA Maryland cares deeply about the quality of Maryland's built environment, particularly space that houses our future generations. It's important that we plan well and support schools that are healthy for the community and for the students. We therefore respectfully ask your committee to support SB071 that creates a commission aimed at understanding and making recommendations to develop Safe Pathways to Schools.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "C. Parts", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Chris Parts, AIA
Director, Past President, AIA Maryland