

# Sen. Ellis Written Testimony SB0158.pdf

Uploaded by: Arthur Ellis

Position: FAV

ARTHUR ELLIS, CPA  
*Legislative District 28*  
Charles County

DEPUTY MAJORITY LEADER

Finance Committee

Vice Chair, Rules Committee

*Senate Chair*

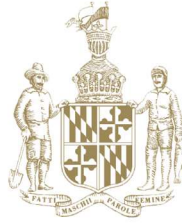
Joint Committee on the  
Management of Public Funds

*Senate Chair*

Joint Committee on  
Workers' Compensation Benefit and  
Insurance Oversight

Senate Chair, Charles County Delegation

Chair, Select Committee Southern  
Maryland



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

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Sponsor Written Testimony: Favorable

Senate Bill 0158: Counties – Construction of Sidewalks and Crosswalks – Safe Alternative Routes to Public Schools

February 16, 2026

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

I am writing in support of Senate Bill 526 to protect students on their routes to and from school. Tragically, two elementary school students were killed during their commute walking to school in Maryland, according to an NBC Washington news report in November 2023.<sup>1</sup> Across Maryland, concerned families struggle to find safe alternatives when they are ineligible for transportation services for their children in Maryland. To address these serious issues, Senate Bill 158 would require a county board to prepare and share a public report that identifies areas of the county where a student would be ineligible for transportation services to their school based on distance and pathways of safe alternative routes that the student can use to travel to school. Additionally, the governing body of the county would be required to review the report, construct the sidewalks and crosswalks needed for the safe alternative route identified in the report, and work with other counties as needed to quickly plan and develop alternative routes students may need to use in the other county.

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<sup>1</sup> Paul Wagner, *2 Children Hit, Killed While Walking to School in Prince George's County Police Say*, NBC4 Washington (Nov. 20, 2023, 4:35 PM), <https://www.nbcwashington.com/news/local/2-children-hit-killed-while-walking-to-school-in-prince-georges-county-police-say/3475397/>.

Unfortunately, the issues causing the 2023 incident of two children dying on their walk to school may not be a mere anomaly. While some people would probably assume that all children would have access to school buses that safely transport them to and from school on time, data shows that many children fall out of reach from school transportation and may even face transportation delays even when they are eligible for public school transportation.<sup>2</sup> One December 2023 report from the Maryland Nonpublic School Transportation Task Force found that many non-public students do not have access to school transportation and recommended a report be created to allow counties to investigate and share possible solutions for best transportation options with those students and their caregivers.<sup>3</sup> One 2023 CBS News report noted that more than 2300 students were ineligible for transportation and that there were three students of students being approached while walking to school, including one incident where two students were robbed at gunpoint while walking home from school.<sup>4</sup> So, Maryland has an issue where students may have to walk long distances, face tardiness, or deal with safety issues while walking to school.

Senate Bill 158 is a critical first step to addressing the safety issues of students who are ineligible for transportation to school. While more can be done to address these issues, this bill would get this important work started by having county boards research alternatives, work together with other counties, create the alternative routes, and publicly share these routes so that all students can get the education they need safely, no matter where in the Maryland area they may live.

Sincerely,



Arthur Ellis, CPA

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<sup>2</sup> Diana Furchtgott-Roth, *Maryland Regulations Prevent Kids from Getting to School*, Forbes (Sept. 23, 2022, 4:29 PM EDT), (“The popular perception is that most children take buses, with few seats available. In reality, according to the National Household Travel Survey from the U.S. Department of Transportation, 33 percent of school children took the bus to school, 54 percent were driven, and 10 percent walked or biked.”), <https://www.forbes.com/sites/dianafurchtgott-roth/2022/09/23/maryland-regulations-prevent-kids-from-getting-to-school/>; *see also*, Nonpublic Schools Transportation Task Force, *Final Report: MSAR #14844*, Maryland State Department of Education (Dec. 2023), P. 17-18, <https://marylandpublicschools.org/programs/Documents/Operations/Pupil-Transportation/TaskForce/TaskForceRecomendationsReport.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> Nonpublic Schools Transportation Task Force, *Final Report: MSAR #14844*, Maryland State Department of Education (Dec. 2023), P. 17-18, <https://marylandpublicschools.org/programs/Documents/Operations/Pupil-Transportation/TaskForce/TaskForceRecomendationsReport.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> *see also*, Cristina Mendez, *Howard County Parents, Students Push for Policy Reversal on Bus Services*, CBS News (Nov. 16, 2023), <https://www.cbsnews.com/baltimore/news/howard-county-public-schools-grapples-with-new-student-transportation-snafu-maryland/>.

# **SB0158 - Safe Alternative Routes to Public Schools**

Uploaded by: Joseph Jakuta

Position: FAV

**Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment**  
**Testimony on: SB 158 - "Safe Alternative Routes to Public Schools"**  
**Organization: Climate Parents of Prince George's**  
**Person Submitting: Joseph Jakuta, Lead Volunteer**  
**Position: Favorable**  
**Hearing Date: February 18, 2026**



Dear Mr. Chairperson and Committee Members:

Thank you for considering our testimony to SB 158, "Safe Alternative Routes to Public Schools." Climate Parents is a campaign to reduce climate change-causing pollution in our schools, and our group is active in Prince George's County. In particular, we worked directly with Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS) technical staff and other advocates to develop a first-in-the-nation School Climate Change Action Plan.

In our work developing a Climate Change Action Plan for PGCPS, one of the main solutions to reducing vehicle emissions was to encourage more walking and biking to school. This is particularly important for students that live within the non-transportation areas, which are defined as being within 1½ mile for elementary school students and 2 miles for middle and high school students in Prince George's County.<sup>1</sup> However, one of the barriers to walking and biking to school is feeling unsafe, which is largely due to dangerous driving. When students and their parents do not feel it is safe to get to school by other means, they drive independently, which results in more localized air pollution at the entrance of schools, more wasted time for parents, and more chances for vehicles-on-pedestrian collisions at schools.

In Prince George's County, we know firsthand the tragedy that comes when students walking to school are not kept safe. In November 2023, two of our students were killed in a crosswalk by a driver as they walked to school. While this particular legislation will likely not have prevented that specific tragedy, there are numerous close calls every day on the roads that would be affected by this legislation.

We are supportive of this approach of requiring annual examinations of safe routes to schools and to require counties to implement missing sidewalks necessary to create safe routes to schools. This will be a positive step towards making walking to school safer for students. Given modern Geographic Information System (GIS) software these types of maps should be quite reasonable to produce efficiently at a low cost.

We do think it would be wise for the State Board of Education to have a role in ensuring that the plans are completed as expected and meet the legal requirements.

We do applaud that this legislation has been brought forward. We cannot live sustainably if our students cannot access their places of learning by safely walking or biking there. Each student that does not have access to LEA-provided transportation should be able to get to school safely. We need this legislation to put Maryland on the path toward that reality.

We encourage a **FAVORABLE** report for this important legislation.

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<https://www.pgcps.org/globalassets/offices/general-counsel/docs---general-counsel/administrative-procedures/3000/administrative-procedure-3541---student-transportation.pdf>

# **Testimony in support of SB0158 - Safe Alternative**

Uploaded by: Richard KAP Kaplowitz

Position: FAV

02/18/2026

Richard Keith Kaplowitz  
Frederick, MD 21703

**TESTIMONY ON SB#/0158- POSITION: FAVORABLE**

**Counties - Construction of Sidewalks and Crosswalks - Safe Alternative Routes to Public Schools**

**TO:** Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the Education, Energy and the Environment Committee

**FROM:** Richard Keith Kaplowitz

**My name is Richard Keith Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3, Frederick County. I am submitting this testimony in support of SB#/0158, Counties - Construction of Sidewalks and Crosswalks - Safe Alternative Routes to Public Schools**

The recent massive snowstorm has shown the need for this legislation to protect students who walk to school but may end up walking in streets due to uncleared sidewalks. Even in good weather, not every student has a safe path to their school. This bill will ensure we protect those students by ensuring that pathway exists for their use.

Student pedestrian injuries in Maryland school zones are a significant concern, often caused by speeding, distracted driving, and poor visibility. These accidents can lead to serious injuries such as broken bones or head injuries, with liability potentially falling on reckless drivers, school staff, or bus operators.<sup>1</sup>

**Key Considerations for Maryland Student Pedestrian Accidents:**

- **Common Causes**
- **Legal Liability**
- **Safety Incidents**
- **Safety Measures**

We can accomplish this goal for all Maryland students by requiring a county board of education each year to prepare and post to the county's website a report that identifies pathways that public school students who are ineligible for transportation services may use to travel to school using only safe alternative routes under certain circumstances; requiring the governing body of a county each year to review a certain report and construct any sidewalks and crosswalks necessary to create safe alternative routes for public school students under certain circumstances; etc.

**I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on SB#/0158.**

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<sup>1</sup> Google AI Search "student injury walking to school in Maryland"

**2026 MASBHC SB 158 Senate Side.pdf**

Uploaded by: Robyn Elliott

Position: FAV



**Committee:** Education, Energy, and Environment Committee

**Bill Number:** Senate Bill 158 - Counties - Construction of Sidewalks and Crosswalks - Safe Alternative Routes to Public Schools

**Hearing Date:** February 18, 2026

**Position:** Favorable

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The Maryland Assembly on School-Based Health Care (MASBHC) supports *Senate Bill 158 – Counties – Construction of Sidewalks and Crosswalks – Safe Alternative Routes to Public Schools*. As the association representing 90 school-based health centers across Maryland, we advocate for safe and healthy environment for Maryland students. According to the Maryland Department of Transportation, there were 50 pedestrian accidents involving children walking to and from school in 2023.<sup>i</sup> MASBHC supports this legislation because it seeks to enhance the safety of pedestrian routes to school.

We ask for a favorable report. If we can provide any further information, please contact Robyn Elliott at [relliott@policypartners.net](mailto:relliott@policypartners.net) or (443) 926-3443.

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<sup>i</sup> <https://zerodeathsmd.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/PedOnFootBR-2023July08-2024.pdf>

**2026 MASHN SB 158 Senate Side.pdf**

Uploaded by: Robyn Elliott

Position: FAV

**Maryland Association of School Health Nurses**



**Committee:** Education, Energy, and Environment Committee

**Bill Number:** Senate Bill 158 - Counties - Construction of Sidewalks and Crosswalks - Safe Alternative Routes to Public Schools

**Hearing Date:** February 18, 2026

**Position:** Favorable

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The Maryland Association of School Health Nurses (MASHN) supports *Senate Bill 158 – Counties - Construction of Sidewalks and Crosswalks – Safe Alternative Routes to Public Schools*. According to the Maryland Department of Transportation, there were 50 pedestrian accidents involving students walking to and from school in 2023.<sup>i</sup> School pedestrian safety is a high priority for our organization. We support legislation that provides tools to schools and their communities to make students safer.

We ask for a favorable vote. If we can provide any information, please contact Robyn Elliott at [relliott@policypartners.net](mailto:relliott@policypartners.net).

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<sup>i</sup> <https://zerodeathsmd.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/PedOnFootBR-2023July08-2024.pdf>

**2-18-2026 Favorable SB0158 sidewalks.pdf**

Uploaded by: Ronza Othman

Position: FAV



*Live the life you want.*

From: Ronza Othman, President  
National Federation of the Blind of Maryland  
15 Charles Plaza, #3002  
Baltimore, MD 21201 [president@nfbmd.org](mailto:president@nfbmd.org)

To: House Ways & Means Committee

The members of the National Federation of the Blind of Maryland urge the House Ways & Means Committee to give a favorable report to HB0394 – Construction of Sidewalks and Crosswalks as Safe Alternative Routes to Public Schools. Too often, the needs and rights of pedestrians are ignored in favor of requirements for the driving public. It is critical to prioritize children and pedestrians in school zones, as these are the most vulnerable in the communities. Schools are by nature built so that children can walk to and from them, so ensuring safe sidewalks is critical.

The bill addresses the need for reporting progress, or lack thereof, on developing safe routes to schools by posting a report on county websites. The bill even tells counties what to do if they don't have jurisdiction over a section of road needed to build safe routes. It outlines requirements for working with whoever has control and tells them to do it judiciously.

This bill will help blind parents of children as well as blind children themselves. Blind parents frequently have to cope with no sidewalks or crosswalks. Having the alternative of using safe routes to schools will alleviate the many problems that blind parents and other blind adults face. Blind children will be able to develop good habits with regard to safety.

For those reasons, we ask for a favorable report on HB0394. For questions, please contact me at [President@nfbmd.org](mailto:President@nfbmd.org) or at 443-426-4110.

# **SB158 Favorable.pdf**

Uploaded by: sharlimar douglass

Position: FAV



## **SB158 Counties- Construction of Sidewalks and Crosswalks – Safe Alternative Routes to Public Schools**

**Position: Favorable**

**February 12, 2026**

The Maryland Alliance for Racial Equity in Education (MAREE), a coalition of education advocacy, civil rights, and community-based organizations committed to eliminating racial disparities in Maryland's education system, **offers favorable testimony in support of SB158 Counties – Construction of Sidewalks and Crosswalks – Safe Alternative Routes to Public Schools.**

Senate Bill 158 would require county boards of education to identify safe alternative routes to schools and require county governing bodies to construct necessary sidewalks and crosswalks to ensure students can safely walk to school.

Access to education begins with the ability to safely reach school. Currently, students who live outside transportation eligibility zones but lack safe walking infrastructure face an impossible choice: navigate dangerous routes without sidewalks or crosswalks, or miss school entirely. This disproportionately impacts families without access to personal vehicles and creates barriers to consistent school attendance.

Senate Bill 158 directly addresses this equity gap by mandating that counties systematically identify areas where students are ineligible for transportation and then construct the infrastructure necessary to ensure safe passage. This transforms walking to school from a hazardous endeavor into a viable, healthy option for thousands of Maryland students.

The safety implications of this bill cannot be overstated. Each year, pedestrian injuries and fatalities occur when children are forced to walk along roads without sidewalks or cross busy intersections without marked crosswalks. By requiring counties to assess pathways and build necessary infrastructure, SB158 creates a systematic, preventative approach to student safety rather than a reactive one. The bill's comprehensive definition of "safe alternative routes" – including sidewalks, crosswalks, foot paths, and bike paths – acknowledges the diverse environments across Maryland counties and provides flexibility while maintaining high safety standards.

SB158's requirement that county boards of education post annual reports to their websites ensures transparency and accountability. Parents, community members, and advocates will be able to see exactly where gaps in safe infrastructure exist and track progress toward addressing them. This public reporting mechanism empowers communities to engage meaningfully in school safety planning.

Regular school attendance is foundational to academic success, yet unsafe routes to school serve as a hidden barrier for many students. When families fear for their children's safety during the walk to school, attendance suffers. By eliminating this barrier, SB158 supports improved attendance rates, which particularly benefits students in communities that have historically faced disinvestment in infrastructure.

The bill thoughtfully addresses situations where roads fall under state or other jurisdictions through its requirement for collaborative planning and reasonable efforts toward execution. This ensures that jurisdictional complexity does not become an excuse for inaction while recognizing practical limitations. While constructing sidewalks and crosswalks requires investment, the returns – in student safety, improved attendance, better health outcomes, and educational equity – far outweigh the costs. Moreover, this infrastructure benefits entire communities, not just students, by creating safer, more walkable neighborhoods.

SB158 represents a commitment to ensuring that every Maryland student can safely reach their school, regardless of where they live or their family's access to transportation. It addresses a fundamental equity issue in education while promoting student safety, health, and consistent attendance.

MAREE urges a favorable report on Senate Bill 158.

peace & truth,  
sharlimar douglass  
Education Justice Advocate & Analyst  
Maryland Alliance for Racial Equity in Education (MAREE)

Member Organization asking to be named in this testimony – Strong Schools Maryland.

# **SB0158 Timothy Meyer Favorable Testimony.pdf**

Uploaded by: Timothy Meyer

Position: FAV

## Testimony on SB0158 – FAVORABLE

### Counties - Construction of Sidewalks and Crosswalks - Safe Alternative Routes to Public Schools

Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee – February 18, 2026

EEE Committee and Members of the Maryland General Assembly,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit **FAVORABLE testimony in support of SB0158 and cross-filed House legislation, HB0394.**

After two students were tragically struck and killed walking to school in November 2023, I was the longtime PTO president and Safe Routes advocate in Prince George’s County who organized other parent leaders and created a coalition of 11 school parent groups representing more than 8,200 students to raise awareness of this issue and work on long-term solutions. That advocacy helped lead to the Prince George’s County School Pedestrian Safety Workgroup, which met regularly for six months to create a report with 18 detailed recommendations to improve safety around our schools.

SB0158 and HB0394 align with several of our recommendations, including:

- Initiating an overall evaluation of accessibility around schools
- Establishing a unified “walk audit” template
- Creating a pedestrian safety risk measure of schools

Additionally, Prince George’s County Public Schools has hired two Safe Passage coordinators who are vital in this work and have performed more than 100 safety assessments around the county so far. This work helps identify existing safe pathways, needed improvements, and can help assist school, county and municipal officials in project prioritization.

No single solution will prevent every tragedy, and it will require a comprehensive strategy to create safer pathways to and from school. But far too many school communities lack even basic pedestrian safety and this legislation is an important step in addressing this issue. My only additional comment is that construction of new sidewalks and crosswalks will require collaboration between LEAs, county, municipal, and occasionally state officials depending on where a school is located. But we cannot allow jurisdictional coordination to get in the way of student safety.

Every child has the right to get to and from school safely – and I thank Senator Ellis, Delegate Terrasa, and all co-sponsors for introducing this important legislation. I respectfully urge a FAVORABLE report on SB0158 and HB0394.

Timothy Meyer

*Former 5-term PTO president in Prince George’s County  
Former member of the Prince George’s County School Pedestrian Safety Workgroup  
Safe Routes and Walkable Schools Lead on the Prince George’s County Board of Education  
Climate Change Action Plan Ad Hoc Committee*

# **SB0158 Testimony.pdf**

Uploaded by: William Androne

Position: FAV



## **Counties - Construction of Sidewalks and Crosswalks - Safe Alternative Routes to Public Schools**

*Wednesday, February 18, 2026*

EDUCATION, ENERGY, AND THE ENVIRONMENT

**FAVORABLE**

The Chesapeake Regional Association of Student Councils (CRASC) requests a favorable report on SB0158.

The Chesapeake Regional Association of Student Councils (CRASC) is the representative organization of all students enrolled in the secondary schools of AACPS, dedicated to elevating youth voice and promoting student leadership.

SB0103 supports CRASC's plank of "Walkable school zones through the implementation of crossing guards, sidewalks, and crosswalks,"(Plank V, D) by requiring annual reports of where students walk without safe infrastructure such as sidewalks, crosswalks, or bike paths, and mandating counties to build the proper infrastructure to create safe routes. SB0103 ensures that students who walk or bike to school are not forced to navigate dangerous roads just because they live within their school's non-transportation radius.

SB0103 also aligns with CRASC's call for "Schools, policymakers, and the community taking a proactive stance on school safety" (Plank VI, G). Creating safe measures for walking and biking to and from school, it greatly limits the dangers of traffic that students without alternatives face. When students feel physically safe when coming to school, they are more likely to contribute to regular attendance as well as engagement in the classroom.

Accordingly, the Chesapeake Regional Association of Student Councils respectfully requests a favorable report on SB0158 from the committee.

Thank you,

William Andrione, *Secretary of Legislation*

Alma Naghedi, Vivi Chin, and Veda Puvvala, *Legislative Liaisons*



# **MGA 2026 Testimony Bill SB0158 (Safe Alternative R**

Uploaded by: Michael Scepaniak

Position: FWA

Bill: SB0158

Bill Title: Counties - Construction of Sidewalks and Crosswalks - Safe Alternative Routes to Public Schools



Position: **Favorable with Amendments**

Members of the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee,

As a group that advocates for walkable, people-oriented, appealing communities throughout the Baltimore region, we support SB0158.

Fewer and fewer children are walking to school these days. In 1969, 89% of students in grades K through eight who lived within one mile of school traveled there either on-foot or by bicycle. By 2009, that number had plummeted to 35%. [1] Part of the reason is that more and more schools are located further than a mile away from their students' homes. This is driven by a desire to build schools on cheaper available land and our full embrace of low-density, automobile-centric development.

But, there still remain students within walking distance and parents who see the benefits in them walking. This bill will enable us to take some real steps to allow and encourage it. That said, we'd like to see four changes made to the bill.

The bill's definition of a "safe alternative route" specifies, in part, a road with sidewalks. We'd like to see this clarified based on the type of road and quality of the sidewalk. While a parent may be willing to allow their 1st grader to walk on a buffered sidewalk lined with street trees along a 25 mph residential street, they may not be willing to allow it on an unbuffered, fully-exposed sidewalk along a 45 mph arterial road. Some context-based criteria are needed here. Also, the sidewalks should be specified to be ADA-compliant, thereby allowing students of all abilities to use the specified route.

The bill calls for the county to identify safe alternative routes for those students who would be ineligible for transportation services based on the distance between their home and the school. This should be clarified to state that **no safe alternative route can be longer than the calculated distance** which has caused the student to be classified as being ineligible for transportation services. If a student lives across the road from their school, but that road is a 6-lane 45 mph divided arterial with slip lanes, the safe alternative route identified for them cannot be a 1 1/2 mile (transportation services qualifying) circuitous route around that arterial.

The bill calls for the county to construct any sidewalks and crosswalks necessary to create safe alternative routes for students as identified in the mandated report. While we would like to see

these routes created immediately, we concede that funding limits and community input will make such quick action infeasible. As such, we would like to see an expected schedule of progress spelled out. Requiring each county to make the necessary changes to provide an additional 10% of the applicable student population with a safe alternative route (such that all counties reach 100% completion within 10 years) seems like a good balance. After all, we're talking about the construction of relatively low-cost active transportation infrastructure, not new roads.

The bill does not call for any consequences should a county fail to comply with the mandate to provide the safe alternative routes called for. We suggest that any county that lags or misses the expected schedule of progress must be required to provide transportation services to those students who have not been provided a safe alternative route (or some other consequence).

In summary, we thoroughly endorse the motivations behind this bill, but would like to see it strengthened in four ways:

1. Add more detail to what "a road with sidewalks" means.
2. Make any identified safe alternative routes a walkable distance for each applicable student.
3. Specify an expected schedule of progress in constructing any identified safe alternative routes.
4. Specify consequences for a county failing to provide their safe alternative routes.

We hope the committee finds these points helpful and convincing and we urge its members to **vote in favor of SB0158, with our suggested amendments**. Thank you for your efforts and the opportunity for us to testify on this legislation.

[BaltPOP - Baltimoreans for People-Oriented Places](#)

#### References:

[1] The National Center for Safe Routes to School. "Walking to School: Trends, Issues and Evidence". As of February 8, 2025.

<https://www.walkbiketoschool.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/Trends-and-Research.pdf>

**SB0158-EEE\_MACo\_OPP.pdf**

Uploaded by: Sarah Sample

Position: UNF



## Senate Bill 158

### *Counties - Construction of Sidewalks and Crosswalks - Safe Alternative Routes to Public Schools*

MACo Position: **OPPOSE**

To: Education, Energy, and the Environment  
Committee

Date: February 18, 2026

From: Sarah Sample

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **OPPOSES** SB 158. While well-intentioned, this bill would place a costly mandate on county governments to carry out new state policies to create sidewalks and crosswalks as alternative routes for all public-school students. **MACo does not raise policy objections to the bill's goal of ensuring safe routes for students – county concerns are merely practical and cost-driven.**

As a rule, MACo resists state policies that result in costly or burdensome local implementation. SB 158 would implement a costly, logistically difficult mandate for counties to implement. The prior year fiscal notes highlighted several counties in which this proposal would be extremely costly to execute. That feedback highlights construction and renovation costs rising to multiple millions of dollars. Others anticipate the need to purchase additional buses and hire bus drivers to meet the requirements of the bill. Redistricting is also an acknowledged means to compliance in the bill, which is a significant barrier to cross in order to comply – and notably, county government lacks the ability to make such changes.

Additionally, the route to school may not be subject to just the jurisdiction of the county, as municipal or State-owned roadways may compose part, or even all, of the route. This bill unfairly requires counties to develop a plan with the controller of the road and re-direct county resources to construct sidewalks and crosswalks on roads not owned by the county. This is all while there is no obligation for the State to participate in the mandate or renovations when their highways are implicated by the study.

Furthermore, the one-size-fits-all mandate of SB 158 simply does not fit the transportation and geographic realities of Maryland counties. Counties – and schools – face diverse geographic challenges, transportation laws (like rights-of-way), and community characteristics that would make it difficult, if not impossible, to apply SB 158 to all 24 jurisdictions. Under state law, counties would have no choice but to fund the significant costs associated with SB 158 – competing for limited local funds against education, school construction, public safety, and other essential public services.

Counties agree with the intent of SB 158 and that the information it seeks to collect is important in understanding the needs of Maryland students, but this legislation goes too far in mandating county resources of an unknown amount, all while neglecting the logistical capacities of counties to implement it. For this reason, MACo **OPPOSES** SB 158 and urges an **UNFAVORABLE** report.

# **FINAL SB 158 Sidewalks and Crosswalks - Safe Alter**

Uploaded by: Jordan Baucum Colbert

Position: INFO



## **POSITION STATEMENT**

**Bill:** SB 158 Counties - Construction of Sidewalks and Crosswalks - Safe Alternative Routes to Public Schools

**Position:** Informational

**Date:** February 18, 2026

**Contact:** Debra Borden, General Counsel  
Jordan Baucum Colbert, Senior Government Affairs Analyst

Dear Chair Brian Feldman,

The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (“M-NCPPC” or the “Commission”) has not voted on this bill. However, staff have provided an informational statement.

**What this Bill Does.** This bill requires a county board of education each year to prepare and post to the county's website a report that identifies pathways that public school students who are ineligible for transportation services may use to travel to school using only safe alternative routes under certain circumstances. This bill would also require the governing body of a county each year to review a certain report and construct any sidewalks and crosswalks necessary to create safe alternative routes for public school students under certain circumstances.

This bill creates a clear, recurring obligation for counties to ensure safe walking routes for students who do not receive bus transportation. It would also identify walking and bicycling routes to school within each MCPS school catchment area and ensure all students within the area can safely walk and cycle to school. The bill will significantly influence capital planning, school access strategies, and Vision Zero implementation. This legislation would implement *Pedestrian Master Plan* key action P-5e in Montgomery County.

**Effective date of July 1, 2026.** We recommend that the sponsor consider implementation be pushed a year out to allow Counties and school districts time to have the necessary coordination discussions. For Prince George's County, in larger communities with many schools, it will take some time to determine the gaps in the network and design and fund the required improvements as sidewalks and crosswalks must be designed to be ADA compliant which requires engineering. Funding of improvements may also be an issue so if the sponsor is not supportive of delaying the bill effective date, then maybe a phased-out schedule approach for implementation should be considered.

**Coordination of School Districts.** If passed this bill may require additional coordination with School District, and other County Departments to complete a network analysis/mapping to determine gaps for each school in providing safe routes.