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February 26, 2026

OPPOSE: HB 1019 School Bus Transition - Propane-Powered School Buses - Grant Program, Fund, and Purchase

Mr. Chair and Members of the Committee:

Maryland LCV Opposes HB 1019 School Bus Transition - Propane-Powered School Buses - Grant Program, Fund, and Purchase.

In 2019, the General Assembly passed HB 1255 to establish the Zero-Emission Vehicle School Bus Transition Grant Program, with the goal of replacing diesel buses with zero-emission electric buses to protect children's health and address the climate crisis. Expanding this program to include propane-powered buses would undermine that intent by continuing children's exposure to harmful pollution and delaying urgent climate action.

Propane is a fossil fuel that emits harmful pollutants, including nitrogen oxides and volatile organic compounds, at levels comparable to—or in some cases higher than—diesel buses.¹ It also produces higher levels of carbon monoxide and ozone-forming pollutants, exposing students and drivers to unhealthy air. Allowing propane buses through this program would lock school districts into a polluting technology for at least 12 years, the average life span of a school bus, impacting children throughout their entire school experience. Over their full lifecycle, propane buses also emit significantly more greenhouse gases per mile than electric buses, exacerbating the climate crisis and threatening future generations.² This runs counter to Maryland's climate commitments under the Climate Solutions Now Act, which mandates a 60% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2031 and net-zero emissions by 2045. Maryland's Climate Pollution Reduction Plan identifies transportation electrification—including school buses—as essential to meeting these targets. Transitioning from diesel to propane fails to reduce lifecycle emissions and undermines progress toward these legally binding goals.

¹Todd, A. and Zepka, B. (no date) Clearing the air on emissions from propane-burning school buses, Electric School Bus Initiative. Available at: <https://electricschoolbusinitiative.org/clearing-air-emissions-propane-burning-school-buses#:~:text=Propane%2Dburning%20school%20buses%20release,fossil%20fuel%20onboard%20the%20vehicle> (Accessed: 23 February, 2026).

² The evidence is clear: Electric School buses are the best choice to reduce emissions (no date) Electric School Bus Initiative. Available at: <https://electricschoolbusinitiative.org/evidence-clear-electric-school-buses-are-best-choice-reduce-emissions> (23 February, 2026).

These emissions disproportionately impact communities of color, which already face a higher burden of air pollution. The American Lung Association's *State of the Air* report finds that people of color in the United States are more than twice as likely as white individuals to live in areas with unhealthy air quality, and Hispanics are nearly three times as likely to live in communities with dangerous levels of pollution.³ At the same time, students from low-income families and Black households are more likely than their peers to rely on school buses, increasing their exposure to diesel emissions. Together, these factors make reducing school bus pollution not only a public health priority but also a critical environmental justice issue.⁴

Zero-emission electric school buses are the safest and healthiest option for children and communities. In Maryland, about 6.8% of children have asthma, and Black non-Hispanic children experience much higher rates of asthma-related emergency visits than White non-Hispanic children, reflecting racial disparities in respiratory health.⁵ Asthma is a leading cause of school absenteeism. Children riding zero-emission buses experience lower pollution exposure, improved lung health, and reduced absenteeism. For these reasons, funds dedicated to school bus transitions should be reserved exclusively for electric buses.

Every day, more than 650,000 children ride one of approximately 7,200 diesel school buses in Maryland. Replacing diesel with another fossil fuel does not protect children's health, advance equity, or meet the state's climate obligations.

For these reasons, Maryland LCV urges an UNFAVORABLE report on HB 1019.

³ State of the Air, American Lung Association.at: <https://www.lung.org/research/sota> (23 February, 2026)

⁴ *Prioritizing Equity in Providing Technical Assistance to Underserved School Districts under WRI's Electric School Bus Initiative* (no date) World Resources Institute. Available at: <https://electricschoolbusinitiative.org/update/prioritizing-equity-providing-technical-assistance-underserved-school-districts-under-wris-electric> (23 February, 2026)

⁵ *Asthma in Maryland — Asthma Data*. Maryland Department of Health. Available at: <https://health.maryland.gov/phpa/OEHFP/EH/pages/asthma.aspx> (23 February, 2026)