



Committee: Government, Labor, and Elections; Ways and Means

Bill Number: House Bill 394 – Counties – Construction of Sidewalks and Crosswalks – Safe Alternative Routes to Public Schools

Hearing Date: February 12, 2026

Position: Support

On behalf of the **Maryland School Counselor Association (MSCA)**, which represents professional school counselors across the State dedicated to supporting the academic, career, and social–emotional development of all students, we respectfully submit this testimony in **support of House Bill 394 – Counties – Construction of Sidewalks and Crosswalks – Safe Alternative Routes to Public Schools.**

House Bill 394 requires each county board of education to annually identify and report safe alternative routes—such as sidewalks, crosswalks, foot paths, and bike paths—that students who are not eligible for transportation services may use to travel to and from school. The bill also requires county governing bodies to review these reports and construct necessary infrastructure to ensure student safety.

School counselors see firsthand how students’ physical safety outside of school directly affects their well-being, attendance, and readiness to learn. When students must walk or bike to school without safe, clearly designated routes, they face increased risks of injury, anxiety, and disengagement from school. These challenges disproportionately impact students in underserved communities where safe infrastructure may be lacking.

House Bill 394 takes an important and proactive step toward addressing these concerns by requiring counties to assess and improve the safety of routes students use each day. Ensuring safe access to school supports consistent attendance, promotes student well-being, and helps create learning environments where students can arrive at school ready to engage academically and socially.

School counselors play a critical role in identifying barriers to student success and advocating for systems that support the whole child. Safe and reliable access to school is foundational to those efforts and to positive school climate overall.

For these reasons, the Maryland School Counselor Association urges a **favorable report** on **House Bill 394**. If you have any questions, please contact Jocelyn I. Collins at jcollins@policypartners.net.