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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

February 12, 2026

To: The Honorable Melissa Wells
Chair, Government, Labor, and Elections Committee

From: Delegate Jen Terrasa
District 13, Howard County

Re: Sponsor Testimony in Support of HB 394, Counties - Construction of
Sidewalks and Crosswalks - Safe Alternative Routes to Public Schools

Dear Chair Wells, Vice Chair Kerr, and Members of the Government, Labor, and Elections Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to present HB 394, which aims to make it safer for our children to get to school. This is a cross-file of SB 158, Senator Ellis' bill which he has sponsored for several years.

BACKGROUND

When school boards make decisions about routes to school and bus eligibility, parents of non-bus riders need to determine the safest route for their children to get to school. This is an easier task for some than others. Some families find that there are no sidewalks or pathways for their children to walk to school and that the only possible routes require children to walk along the side of busy roads or cross busy intersections.

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. On the national level 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

To address these serious issues, House Bill 394 would require a county school 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 and identify safe alternative routes that the student can use to travel to school. Frankly, this should already be part of the conversation when a route is determined and reviewed each year in case something changes. We should know how our children are getting to school and that it is safe.

- Note these distances can be considerable. Students that live within the non-transportation areas, which in Howard County are 1 mile for Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 5: 1.5 miles for Middle School and 2 miles for High School,
- Those students either walk, bike or get a ride unless a parent has the flexibility at work to drive them. So there is an equity issue here as well.

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, if necessary, to quickly plan and develop alternative routes students may need to use in the other county.

CONCLUSION

Safe, accessible routes also encourage active lifestyles, improve physical health, and lessen environmental impacts by reducing reliance on cars. Importantly, improving pedestrian routes benefit all community members—students and others in wheelchairs, those challenged by uneven terrain, and families with strollers—ensuring inclusivity in our transportation planning.

By adopting HB 394, Maryland can make a decisive commitment to the safety, health, and future of our students, paving the way for sustainable, community-focused infrastructure that meets the needs of all its residents.

I respectfully urge a favorable report on HB 394.