

BILL: House Bill 72
TITLE: County Boards of Education - Student Transportation - Vehicles
POSITION: SUPPORT
DATE: January 20, 2021
COMMITTEE: Ways & Means Committee
CONTACT: John R. Woolums, Esq.

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) supports House Bill 72 to authorize local school systems to provide transportation to and from school for public school students on a vehicle other than a school bus.

MABE supports this bill because it will provide much needed flexibility for local school systems to more efficiently and cost-effectively transport students using vehicles other than school buses.

Local school systems are also requesting the discretion to utilize smaller vehicles than traditional school buses in order to benefit the educational needs of students. The bill specifies that this new option will apply to the transportation of (1) preschool-age students; (2) students with disabilities; (3) homeless youth; (4) children in foster care; (5) students without access to school buses; (6) students in a nonpublic special education school placement; or (7) students in dual enrollment programs or work programs or other educational programs based off the school campus.

Importantly, the bill ensures the continued focus on student safety by requiring that the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), in consultation Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA), to adopt regulations establishing minimum vehicle and driver safety standards for the other modes of transportation provided for under this legislation. On behalf of local boards of education, MABE greatly appreciates the balanced approach of this legislation to provide greater flexibility while assuring that statewide standards will govern the safe transport of students at all times.

Again, MABE believes that the flexibility provided by this bill will greatly benefit school systems in meeting the educational needs of individual and small groups of students through safe and cost-effective options to using school buses in all circumstances.

For these reasons, MABE requests a favorable report on House Bill 72.