



House Bill 1451

School Bus Purchasing – Zero-Emission Vehicle – Requirement

MACo Position: **OPPOSE**

To: Ways and Means and Environment and
Transportation Committees

Date: March 4, 2020

From: Drew Jabin

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **OPPOSES** HB 1451. This stringently inflexible bill would place a costly mandate on school systems and county governments to carry out new state policy to purchase zero-emission vehicles in upcoming years.

As a rule, MACo resists state policies that result in costly or burdensome local implementation. HB 1451 would implement an extremely costly mandate for local boards of education to purchase zero-emission school buses as well as limit contracting with transportation services for school buses to contractors that have purchased zero-emission school buses. Under state law, counties have no choice but to support these costs for county boards of education—competing for limited local funds against school construction, public safety, roadway maintenance, and other essential public services. Amidst a broad-based re-thinking of Maryland’s education priorities under the Kirwan Blueprint legislation, HB 1451 introduces a substantial new mandated cost fully outside the basis for that new vision for school funding.

HB 1451 is costly on multiple fronts. The Fiscal Note prepared by the Department of Fiscal Services recognizes direct costs of purchasing these vehicles, citing zero-emission vehicle cost of \$340,000 per zero-emission vehicle. Another concern is the capital costs of installing school vehicle charging stations. Lastly, a less clear but still significant concern is the necessity of implementing additional school bus routes, resulting in potentially millions spent on personnel and operating costs. Current bus routes in some counties would not be able to accommodate electric school buses as the current route is too long.

This bill, as written, is an extremely significant unfunded mandate for local boards of education, and by extension, county governments. For this reason, MACo **OPPOSES** HB 1451 and urges an **UNFAVORABLE** report.