

January 28, 2024

Honorable Members of the Subcommittee on Elementary and Secondary Education of the Committee on Appropriations of the House of Delegates:

I am writing to enthusiastically support HB937, which will clearly state that Virginia encourages active student transportation. There are many benefits when students walk and bike to school - to our kids, to our school districts, and to our communities. HB937 articulates good public policy and I urge you to vote for it.

I live in Arlington County with my husband and three children, who are currently in third, fifth and seventh grades in Arlington Public Schools. I have been volunteering with student transportation for over a decade - starting with serving on our school district's student transportation committees. When the pandemic limited capacity on our school buses, I worked with our County to establish bike buses and started the bike bus to my kids' school. Three years later, the [Escuela Key Bicibus](#) has three separate routes of children biking to school every Friday. We've had up to 50 students ride with us.



Having led a bike bus for so long, I have experienced first hand the many benefits of active student transportation, which are also backed by academic research.

For our kids: active student transportation means kids get physical activity on the way to school. They arrive at school more ready to learn and show [higher academic achievement](#). Being able to walk or bike to school also gives kids more social time and [improves their mental health](#). Active transportation helps kids form [healthy](#) and sustainable habits. Finally, by getting to school on their own two feet or two wheels, kids are learning life skills that they can use to travel independently as they grow up.

For our school districts: active student transportation can [save our school districts critical funding](#). School districts can save on buying, fueling and parking school buses. Active transportation does not require large paved spaces for drop off lines and does not require teachers to spend their valuable time managing car drop offs.

For our communities: active student transportation introduces active transportation into families, which can improve physical and mental health for the entire family. It also takes cars off the road, which [improves our air quality](#) and reduces the need for road maintenance. Kids getting around on their own also reduces the burden on parents and caregivers.

In addition to all of these benefits, the bike bus brings joy. Kids look forward to riding with us every Friday - even asking to ride more often. The adults love to ride with the kids, too - I know it is the best way for me to start a work day. The people we pass on the street wave and smile and regulars eagerly expect our bike bus to roll through. Even on days where the temperature has dipped below 20F, the bike bus riders have gotten to school with huge smiles.

Active student transportation is environmentally and fiscally responsible and it is good for our children. Supporting active student transportation is good public policy. Please pass HB937 and support active transportation for all of Virginia's students.



Thank you for your time and your service to the Commonwealth.

Sincerely,

Gillian Burgess
Arlington County, Virginia