

Timestamp	First name	Last name	Phone number	City	State	Zip Code	Are you representing yourself?	Remarks	Attachment
2024-01-31 21:	Donna	Williams		Fort Meade	MD	20755	Yes	I am writing to ask the Council to consider funding the installation of bus stop shelters near AACPS schools to protect our students that ride public transportation from the elements. Students near Fort Meade shouldn't have to sit on overturned shopping carts while they wait, see attached image. Maryland law currently allows counties to lower their respective voting age, by city or county council vote, for municipal elections thereby avoiding the need for a statewide referendum or ballot initiative. Thus far, only five Maryland municipalities have endeavored to make such local electoral changes: Greenbelt, Hyattsville, Mount Rainier, Riverdale Park, and Takoma Park. Takoma Park became the first city in the nation to extend local election voting rights to 16-year-olds in 2013. Would you consider sponsoring legislation that would make this possible in Anne Arundel County? Anne Arundel County's Board of Education student member is the only student representative on a local board in the nation who has full voting rights. Why not extend the experience of having one's voice and vote matter to all Maryland youth at least 16 years of age but especially those in Anne Arundel County? I believe this esteemed body should introduce legislation that acknowledges the opinions of the Anne Arundel County Board of Education's true "electorate"—its students.	<i>Photo of student attached.</i>
2024-02-01 20:	Kurt	Svendsen	4434499190	ARNOLD	MD	21012	Yes	Please see the attached testimony regarding a specific example of systemic racism and the difficulty encountered when attempting to obtain public information to support this claim.	YES

Feb 5, 2024 County Council – Invitation to Audience  
**Avoiding Systemic Racism by Using a Racial Lens**  
**A Case Study of the Importance of the MD Public Information Act (and its weaknesses)**

On the following page is a story demonstrating an example of systemic racism and the year-long struggle to wrestle public information from the Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS) in order to support this claim. I implore you all, County Councilmembers and County Citizens alike, to read this *one-page* story.

I became aware of this specific example of systemic racism through my interaction with a young Black man in my community. I was eventually able to assemble, in my own “data wonky” way, data-driven support for what this young Black man already “knew in his heart” as a result of his own lived experience, and that of his ancestors.

My data-driven conclusion can be summarized as follows:

- Black and Hispanic students disproportionately experienced “Missed Days” due to Lack of Transportation during school year 2022-23 in the “most impacted” group of schools.
  - 80% of such absences occurred in these schools; a total of 26,903 “Missed Days”.
  - A total of 33,537 such absences occurred system-wide.
- In this “most impacted” group of schools:
  - White students were 35% of enrollment, but experienced 18% of such absences.
    - That’s 17 percentage points LESS
  - Black student were 29% of enrollment, but experienced 36% of such absences.
    - That’s 7 percentage points MORE
    - **A gap of 24 percentage points compared to White students**
  - Hispanic students were 26% of enrollment, but experienced 39% of such absences.
    - That’s 13 percentage points MORE
    - **A gap of 30 percentage points compared to White students**

I draw two conclusions from all of this:

1. If AACPS had viewed the school bus shortage **through a racial lens**, policies and procedures could have been enacted to mitigate this disproportionate impact on people of color.
2. It should not require such effort for a County citizen to obtain this kind of data. A representative democracy depends upon the **accountability** fostered by a transparent government that proactively makes open data accessible to all.

Why am I sharing this with the County Council? Because the same applies to County Government.

Sincerely,

Kurt Svendsen, Arnold, MD

## Avoiding Systemic Racism by Using a Racial Lens

On 9/30/2022, the Capital Gazette published an article entitled: "[Anne Arundel students have missed more than 3,100 instruction days because of bus service problems, system says](#)". Shortly thereafter, a young african american friend of mine expressed the following in a Facebook post:

"... blacks make up 22% of the student population in Anne Arundel County...yet we make up more than 50% of all students missing schools because of bus shortage. Kids in Severna Park and South River are missing 6 to 7 days compared to schools like Meade where kids are missing 268 days of school... and yall want me to believe its cause of driver shortage, with the past AACPS has, please please stay woke and protect them babies. AA don't have their best interest in mind..." (Nov. 2022)

I asked him to identify the data source he used because I wanted to dive into it in an effort to tell this story in a more comprehensive "data-driven" manner. When he referenced this article, I realized that he had taken that article and combined it with **his own lived experience** to draw his conclusions. I pointed out to him that this article did **not** include any race / ethnicity information, but by using existing and known demographic breakdowns by school combined with more comprehensive "absences" data, a rough estimate could probably be extrapolated. I explained to him that:

"...working this kind of puzzle is what I call FUN! And, it will be especially gratifying if it can provide a 'data driven' visualization that supports what you 'know in your heart.'"

On 11/22/2022, I submitted a MD Public Information Action ([PIA request](#)) to Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS) requesting updated and comprehensive data on absences due to lack of transportation. On 12/01/2022, I submitted a [supplemental request](#) for a racial breakdown of these absences. I received a [response to my initial request on 12/15/2022](#) which was used to generate this update to the data originally reported by the Capital Gazette back on 9/30/2022. I shared this [initial report](#) and [this update](#) on the AACPS Transportation Advocacy Facebook group site, and received many [replies](#) of dismay and concern over the conclusion:

"The **schools most impacted** by "Missed Days" are disproportionately those schools where there is a **higher percentage of non-white** student population. (White 50%=>35%, Black 22%=>35%, Hispanic 18%=>28%)"

This finding was remarkably similar to what my young african american friend already "knew in his heart." This is also a clear example of "**systemic racism**." If AACPS had viewed the school bus shortage **through a racial lens**, policies and procedures could have and should have been enacted to mitigate this disproportionate impact on people of color.

The data obtained from AACPS did **not** include a racial breakdown of **the students** who missed days due to lack of transportation. The best I could do was "infer" a disproportionate impact based on **the schools** which were disproportionately impacted. On 12/15/2022, [AACPS denied my request](#) for this type of racial breakdown. Following nearly a year-long effort including mediation with the State's PIA Ombudsman (file 949-01-23), deliberation on my State PIA Compliance Board [complaint \(PIACB 24-05\)](#), and their [11/1/2023 decision](#), AACPS finally [provided on 11/20/2023 a racial breakdown](#) of student absences due to lack of transportation.

Using this data, I've been able to complete a [2nd update](#) to the data originally reported by the Capital Gazette back on 9/30/2022; this time the focus is on **the students**:

"**Black and Hispanic students disproportionately** experienced "Missed Days" due to Lack of Transportation in the 'most impacted' group of schools (80% of all these absences).  
> White students are 35% of enrollment, but experience 18% of these absences (**17% pts LESS**)  
> Black students: 29%=>36% (**7% pts MORE**) > Hispanic students: 26%=>39% (**13% pts MORE**)"

It should not require such effort for a County citizen to obtain this kind of data. A representative democracy depends upon the **accountability** fostered by a transparent government that proactively makes open data accessible to all.

**2nd UPDATE: Instruction Days Missed Because of Bus Service Problems reported in Capital Gazette on 9/30/22**

Data Source: MD Public Information Act (PIA) supplemental request dated 12/01/22 & response dated 11/20/23 (absences due to lack of transportation by school and by race for entire SY22-23)  
 This supplemental request was in follow-up to an initial PIA request dated 11/22/22 & partial response dated 12/15/22 (absences due to lack of transportation by school as of 12/12/22)

**1st Update (Dec 2022):**  
 The schools *most impacted* by "Missed Days" are disproportionately those schools where there is a *higher percentage of non-white* student population. (White 50%=>**28%**, Black 22%=>**35%**, Hispanic 18%=>**28%**)

**2nd Update (Nov 2023):**  
 Black and Hispanic students *disproportionately* experienced "Missed Days" due to Lack of Transportation in the "most impacted" group of schools (80% of all these absences).  
 > White students are 35% of enrollment, but experience **18%** of these absences (**17 % pts LESS**)  
 > Black students: 29%=>**36%** (**7 % pts MORE**) > Hispanic students: 26%=>**39%** (**13 % pts MORE**)

CatTyp	AlphID	School Name	Category	Type	SY20-21 Enrollment	Total Absences	SY22-23 Enrollment % by Race Group				SY22-23 Absence % by Race Group				% Point Difference: Absence % - Enroll %			
							White	Black	Hispanic	Other	White	Black	Hispanic	Other	White	Black	Hispanic	Other
	77	▶ Annapolis High	High	High	2,159	13,458	27.46%	23.93%	43.86%	4.75%	13.74%	28.56%	53.69%	4.02%	-13.72	4.63	9.82	-0.73
	83	▶ Meade High	High	High	2,143	1,873	10.08%	48.13%	30.07%	11.71%	4.32%	57.71%	32.19%	5.77%	-5.76	9.58	2.12	-5.95
	84	▶ North County High	High	High	2,446	1,443	35.94%	26.81%	25.66%	11.59%	34.51%	31.39%	19.96%	14.14%	-1.43	4.59	-5.70	2.55
	102	▶ Meade Middle	Middle	Middle	827	1,231	6.47%	41.37%	42.64%	9.52%	4.47%	59.95%	26.08%	9.50%	-2.00	18.58	-16.56	-0.01
	99	▶ MacArthur Middle	Middle	Middle	883	996	18.91%	50.91%	15.03%	15.15%	5.02%	75.50%	5.82%	13.65%	-13.89	24.59	-9.21	-1.49
	90	▶ Annapolis Middle	Middle	Middle	964	955	10.24%	30.72%	54.84%	4.21%	17.80%	31.94%	39.79%	10.47%	7.56	1.22	-15.04	6.26
	98	▶ Lindale Middle	Middle	Middle	1,185	812	35.96%	28.92%	24.51%	10.60%	24.38%	45.44%	22.66%	7.51%	-11.58	16.52	-1.85	-3.09
	101	▶ Marley Middle	Middle	Middle	940	754	29.55%	31.17%	29.55%	9.74%	46.95%	26.66%	18.57%	7.82%	17.40	-4.51	-10.98	-1.92
	104	▶ Old Mill Middle North	Middle	Middle	992	615	27.19%	45.63%	17.81%	9.38%	14.47%	66.02%	14.63%	4.88%	-12.72	20.39	-3.18	-4.50
	105	▶ Old Mill Middle South	Middle	Middle	964	491	42.80%	25.23%	17.67%	14.30%	37.07%	23.01%	18.13%	21.79%	-5.73	-2.22	0.46	7.49
	92	▶ Bates Middle	Middle	Middle	700	459	34.16%	23.17%	34.75%	7.92%	31.15%	28.76%	34.42%	5.66%	-3.01	5.59	-0.33	-2.25
	121	▶ Phoenix Academy HS	Other	Special Education	289	449	31.44%	48.91%	10.48%	9.17%	11.58%	56.79%	21.16%	10.47%	-19.86	7.88	10.68	1.30
	42	▶ Meade Heights Elementary	Elementary	Elementary	364	434	16.17%	56.33%	16.17%	11.32%	0.23%	62.67%	34.10%	3.00%	-15.94	6.34	17.93	-8.33
	55	▶ Point Pleasant Elementary	Elementary	Elementary	459	429	50.49%	18.07%	23.18%	8.25%	34.97%	10.02%	50.58%	4.43%	-15.53	-8.05	27.40	-3.82
	86	▶ Old Mill High	High	High	2,394	405	33.78%	35.62%	18.81%	11.78%	35.06%	32.59%	24.94%	7.41%	1.28	-3.03	6.12	-4.37
	44	▶ Mills-Parole Elementary	Elementary	Elementary	559	404	2.94%	34.78%	59.00%	3.29%	1.98%	79.21%	15.59%	3.22%	-0.96	44.43	-43.40	-0.07
	109	▶ Southern Middle	Middle	Middle	769	395	61.32%	7.68%	26.09%	4.90%	48.35%	8.61%	31.65%	11.39%	-12.97	0.93	5.55	6.49
	82	▶ Glen Burnie High	High	High	2,193	386	32.19%	29.17%	28.57%	10.07%	32.90%	41.97%	20.47%	4.66%	0.72	12.80	-8.11	-5.41
	79	▶ Broadneck High	High	High	2,203	340	72.03%	7.54%	11.09%	9.34%	60.59%	14.12%	18.24%	7.06%	-11.44	6.57	7.15	-2.28
	78	▶ Arundel High	High	High	1,733	311	40.07%	30.92%	11.87%	17.13%	25.08%	41.48%	20.58%	12.86%	-14.99	10.56	8.70	-4.27
	95	▶ Chesapeake Bay Middle	Middle	Middle	1,081	263	84.25%	3.09%	6.56%	6.09%	88.21%	2.28%	5.32%	4.18%	3.96	-0.81	-1.24	-1.91
			<b>"Most Impacted" Sub-Total (80.2% of Total) =&gt;</b>			<b>26,903</b>	<b>35.09%</b>	<b>29.32%</b>	<b>25.59%</b>	<b>10.01%</b>	<b>18.05%</b>	<b>36.40%</b>	<b>39.04%</b>	<b>6.50%</b>	<b>-17.04</b>	<b>7.08</b>	<b>13.46</b>	<b>-3.51</b>
	81	Crofton High	High	High	1,303	255	54.29%	20.17%	11.97%	13.57%	39.22%	27.45%	16.08%	17.25%	-15.08	7.28	4.11	3.68
	80	Chesapeake High	High	High	1,388	229	85.27%	3.17%	5.78%	5.78%	72.49%	14.85%	6.11%	6.55%	-12.78	11.68	0.33	0.77
	91	Arundel Middle	Middle	Middle	1,196	228	39.19%	30.33%	13.76%	16.72%	28.51%	47.37%	11.84%	12.28%	-10.68	17.04	-1.92	-4.44
	15	Davidsonville Elementary	Elementary	Elementary	601	2	77.09%	3.79%	7.74%	11.38%	50.00%	0.00%	0.00%	50.00%	-27.09	-3.79	-7.74	38.62
	123	AACPS Virtual Academy	Other	Virtual Academy	562	1	33.61%	43.42%	12.73%	10.23%	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	66.39	-43.42	-12.73	-10.23
	6	Bodkin Elementary	Elementary	Elementary	498	1	86.15%	1.73%	7.12%	5.00%	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	13.85	-1.73	-7.12	-5.00
	34	Jones Elementary	Elementary	Elementary	293	1	72.12%	6.73%	7.69%	13.46%	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	27.88	-6.73	-7.69	-13.46
<b>Grand-Total</b>					<b>80,745</b>	<b>33,537</b>												
	▶	<b>Schools also in "Most Impacted" group (in 1st Update)</b>			<b>80% of Total =&gt;</b>	<b>26,830</b>												

Disclaimer: I recognize that the data analysis performed and presented in this document (and links) may not be without error, or could be improved upon. The main point is: (1) there seems to be a significant disproportionate impact on Black and Hispanic students, and (2) obtaining this type of data should not be so difficult. I hope AACPS will apply its resources and skilled staff to an even more rigorous review of this type of data in the future in order to more effectively apply a racial lens to matters like this.