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Finance Committee
Chair, Rules Committee

Joint Committees

Children, Youth, and Families
Ending Homelessness
Fair Practices and State Personnel Oversight
Management of Public Funds

Chair, Prince George's County
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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony of Senator Joanne C. Benson
SB 607- Motor and Electric Scooter Sharing Companies-
Nonvisual Access

Good afternoon Madam Chair, Vice Chair Feldman and esteemed members of the Finance Committee. Senate Bill 607- Motor and Electric Scooter Sharing Companies- Nonvisual Access, is a simple bill about equity and accessibility. This bill will require a motor or electric scooter sharing company to provide blind and visually impaired pedestrians access to the same information that is given to those in the sighted public.

We are all aware of motor and electric scooter sharing companies that have proliferated our cities. These companies, like Lime and Spin, allow individuals to rent electric scooters for a short term basis to travel around the city. However, often times these scooters are left abandoned in the middle of sidewalks which can pose a significant risk for blind and visually impaired individuals. Currently, these scooters include a warning regarding the prohibition of inappropriate use of e-scooters, which includes a device identification number and a way to contact the company. However, these e-scooters **don't** provide a nonvisual means of identifying their manufacturers, operating company contact information, or identification number which denies blind and visually impaired individuals of their rights.

Thus, Senate Bill 607 seeks to:

- Require a motor or electric sharing company to include a tactile phone number on each scooter made available to the public so that a blind or visually impaired individual can contact the company and;
- Provide nonvisual access to its website and mobile application in a way that provides full and equal accessibility to individuals with disabilities with standards set by the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

We have introduced several amendments on this bill that will clarify the definition of a motor and electric scooter in addition to working with several scooter companies to address the concerns over contact information.

Senate Bill 607 is simply about basic rights that often times the sighted community takes for granted. If something is wrong, we can easily call a company to complain. However, what if that contact information was written in another language or what if the company simply decided not to provide the contact information at all. We would be up in arms! This bill will rectify this wrong by providing equal access to information on motor and electric scooters for blind and visually impaired individuals.

Thus, I urge the committee for favorable report of SB 607 with amendments.