

January 18, 2021

SUPPORT: SB0199 Maryland Transit Administration - Funding (Transit Safety and Investment Act).

Dear Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee,

The Howard County Conservancy Student Climate Change Institute strongly supports SB0199 Maryland Transit Administration - Funding (Transit Safety and Investment Act).

Public transportation services provide nearly 320,000 daily rides to residents in more than half of Maryland's counties including Howard County. Although a significant portion of Maryland's population utilizes the public transit system, the overall efficiency of transportation in Maryland is substandard: Maryland ranks 3rd in public transit usage among all 50 states, yet 49th for average commute time. It is essential to address that our transit system must be met with equitable funding in order to enhance its safety and dependability. By supporting this legislation which will allow for a safer and more reliable transit system, you will be helping essential workers who endanger themselves every day for us. You will be helping regain the public's confidence in the transit system during these difficult and uncertain times, by addressing the devastating impacts of COVID-19 on public transportation. You will be helping all of the students like ourselves who rely on public transit to go to and from school. You will be helping the senior citizens who depend on public transit to get groceries, pick up prescriptions, and satisfy their basic needs. By supporting this bill, you will be helping all Maryland residents and bettering our daily lives.

Furthermore, the transportation system is critical to reducing Maryland's emissions and carbon footprint. Increased availability of zero-emission transit vehicles will help Maryland reach the goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 40 percent by 2030. The need for environmentally-friendly technologies is pressing, and this legislation will provide the Maryland Transit Administration with the appropriate funding to adequately address environmental concerns within the transit system. As both students and environmental advocates, Maryland aiming for a 95% zero-emission fleet by 2045 will give youth like ourselves indescribable amounts of hope for a better climate. We are already facing the severe consequences of climate change from permafrost melting to wildfires, and in order for our generation to continue to live on a hospitable planet, immediate action is necessary. In order for us to live in a world that is not burdened by consistent extreme weather, widespread diseases, fatal heat waves, deadly flooding, lethal air quality, and constant civil unrest, immediate action is crucial. Widespread local action and legislation are key to combating the global climate change crisis, and the Transit Safety and Investment Act is a powerful step in the right direction. SB0199 demonstrates Maryland's commitment to fighting environmental, economic, and social issues, and shows Maryland's willingness to implement climate-friendly technologies.

We applaud Senator McCray for his commitment to transit equity and the environment, and we strongly urge a favorable report on this bill.

Thank you for your consideration on behalf of the Howard County Conservancy Student Climate Change Institute.

Maya Santhanam of Centennial High School, Saketh Sundar of River Hill High School, Evan Borodin of Reservoir High School, Victoria Benitez of Oakland Mills High School, Oliver Song of Wilde Lake High School, Zainab Zarnish of Reservoir High School