

Testimony on SB 199 – Maryland Transit Safety & Investment Act

Bill Sponsor: Senators McCray, Zucker

Hearing Date: January 27, 2021

Committee: Budget & Taxation

Submitting: Liz Feighner

Position: Favorable

As a resident of Howard County in District 13, I applaud Howard County Executive, Dr. Calvin Ball, for supporting this legislation that will fund a stronger, more equitable regional transit system. As he said at a [news conference](#) on January 11 in Baltimore, we will need “both a well-run and adequately funded system if we want to improve the quality of life and opportunities for all residents and businesses.” He also said that “nearly 60% of our residents commute in and out of Howard county each and every day,” and that “alleviating traffic is important to our quality of life and is vital to protecting our environment by reducing the number of cars on the road.”

As a person concerned about the climate crisis, I fully support funding a safe, reliable and accessible transit system for all residents. Transportation is the #1 contributor to climate pollution in Maryland. As a critical component for addressing the climate crisis, a reliable transportation system will cut greenhouse gas emissions as well as the air pollution that exacerbates respiratory diseases such as COVID-19. Adequate funding will also help alleviate the inequities for communities of color, persons with disabilities, and low-income communities disproportionately harmed by our lack of reliable transportation options

It is unacceptable that the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) has failed to provide sufficient funding to address the annual maintenance and repairs identified in the Capital Needs Inventory (CNI) in July 2019. The accumulated \$1.5 billion backlog of deferred maintenance will only worsen at current funding levels. The result of the neglected maintenance is buses, light rail vehicles, subway trains and commuter trains that break down more often than the MTA’s peer agencies, and in some cases, more often than any transit agency in the nation.

Paratransit service also continues to malfunction, causing poor service that leads to drops in ridership and a downward spiral. Again, this exacerbates the inequities for communities of color, persons with disabilities, and low-income communities who are disproportionately harmed by lack of reliable transportation options. One third of transit riders in the state are essential workers. The pandemic has highlighted the need to provide these workers with a safe and reliable mode of transportation.

The Transit Safety & Investment Act will mandate that MTA’s capital budget be sufficient to address all of the needs identified and get the system back to a state of good repair so that it can operate safely and reliably.

I encourage a FAVORABLE report for this important legislation.

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