

**Committee: Budget & Taxation**

**Testimony on: SB0199-- “Maryland Transit Administration-Funding (Transit Safety and Investment Act”**

**Organization: WISE**

**Person**

**Submitting: Monica O’Connor - Legislative Liaison**

**Position: Favorable**

**Hearing Date: January 20, 2021**

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for allowing our testimony today in support of SB0199. WISE is a grassroots organization of 700 women members in Anne Arundel County. The environmental sub group of WISE is focused on getting State level climate justice legislation passed. Each bill for which we advocate is evaluated through an equity lens, with a particular focus on how disadvantaged communities are affected by the bill and the bill’s climate impact.

**Public Transit Lifts People Out of Poverty:** Public transportation is the great equalizer. It has the potential to move large numbers of people safely and economically throughout the state, connecting them with jobs, community and medical resources. Additionally, it provides economic, educational and recreational opportunities. This is even more important for low-wealth groups and populations of color, where safe and reliable public transportation is an important factor in determining upward mobility.

**Transit System At Risk:** However, a safe, reliable and affordable public transit system in Maryland that serves the interest of all residents is at risk. In 2019, the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) released its first ever Capital Needs Inventory to assess the MTA’s ongoing, unconstrained capital needs. The Inventory identified \$5.7 billion of capital needs over the next ten years, \$1.5 billion of which is an accumulated backlog of deferred maintenance. The Maryland Department of Transportation’s FY 2020–2025 Consolidated Transportation Program (CTP) does not provide the MTA enough funding over the next six years to address the annual maintenance and repairs identified in the CNI. In fact, the proposed program will add to the backlog. The consequences of neglecting maintenance of buses, light rail vehicles, subway trains and commuter trains is that they break down much more frequently than the MTA’s peer

agencies. As a result, lower-income people who can't afford cars are disproportionately affected by these service interruptions. For low income and essential workers, public transportation is a necessity. These communities rely on public transportation to take their children to school, get themselves to work, grocery shop and fulfill other basic needs.

**Reliable Transit Needed for Jobs and the Economy:** The Transit Safety & Investment Act will mandate that MTA's capital budget be at a level that allows it to address all the needs identified in the Capital Needs Inventory and get the system back into a state of good repair so that it can operate safely and reliably for all Marylanders. Maryland has no future if we can't get people to their jobs. Jobs will locate in areas with good infrastructure. This is a problem that we've waited too long to solve.

For these reasons we urge you to vote favorably for SB0199.