
February 17, 2022

The Honorable Kumar P. Barve
Chair, House Environment and Transportation Committee
251 House Office Building
Annapolis MD 21401

Re: Letter of Support – House Bill 726 – Transportation of Disabled Persons - Transportation Network Companies - Employee Requirements

Dear Chairman Barve and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) supports House Bill 726 as it will allow the MDOT Maryland Transit Administration (MDOT MTA) to offer increased service for our mobility customers, via partnering with Transportation Network Companies (TNCs).

House Bill 726 would exempt TNC employees that provide transit service to disabled persons under contract with the MDOT MTA from the fingerprinting requirement within Transportation Article 7-102.1. In place of that, House Bill 726 requires that TNCs that provide these transit services run an annual background screening on all transit operators, including an operator's entire adult history. House Bill 726 requires that any background screening provider used by a TNC be audited and accredited by the Background Screening Credentialing Council of the Professional Background Screening Association. House Bill 726 also gives the MDOT MTA the ability to adopt more stringent regulations at its discretion.

The MDOT MTA has investigated several innovative ways to improve Mobility service and provide additional options for riders. One effective and immediate way to improve service is through contracts with TNCs for a service similar to the MDOT MTA's current Call-a-Ride program. Mobility riders will have the ability to opt into this supplemental service and their access to existing Mobility service will not change.

Many of the MDOT MTA's industry peers offer similar supplemental paratransit service using TNCs. Currently, the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) offers supplemental premium TNC programs within Maryland.

In the MDOT MTA's initial discussions with major TNCs in the region, it was conveyed that the fingerprinting requirements of Section 7-102.1(e) of the Transportation Article would be a barrier to any contractual agreement with MDOT MTA. Enacting House Bill 726 would immediately remove this impasse and allow negotiations and program implementation to proceed. As an added layer of protection for our customers, House Bill 726 codifies Public Service Commission regulations on minimum standards for criminal history screenings and allows the MDOT MTA to adopt more stringent standards, if needed. Additionally, the MDOT MTA will accept and closely monitor complaints from our riders.

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In closing, the operator shortage that currently exists has had a negative impact on the vital service that Mobility supplies to those in need. House Bill 726 will directly address this issue and allow the MDOT MTA to bring a new and innovative solution that will keep our customers safe and on the move.

The Maryland Department of Transportation respectfully requests the Committee grant House Bill 726 a favorable report.

Respectfully submitted,

Holly Arnold
Administrator
Maryland Transit Administration
410-767-3943

Dave Myers
Director of Governmental Affairs
Maryland Transit Administration
410-767-0820