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**Testimony of Len Shindel, former officer
United Steelworkers Local 9477 (Bethlehem Steel, Sparrows Point, Md).
Before the Senate Finance Committee
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Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

I urge the committee to issue a favorable report on SB 23.

I currently reside in Garrett County, my retirement home, after spending my working years as a steelworker and union leader at Bethlehem Steel's Sparrows Point plant.

For 11 years after Bethlehem Steel's bankruptcy, I commuted to a new job in Washington, D.C. by MARC train.

From the beginning of life as a commuter, I witnessed the construction of a new DC Metro station near Gallaudet University, unfolding blocks away from my destination at Union Station.

In ensuing years, I was captivated by the incredible surge of housing, retail, and office development in the adjacent neighborhood, NoMa (North of Massachusetts Avenue).

This development showed that public transportation was a key lever to making our urban and rural spaces more livable, safe, equitable, and prosperous.

Had Maryland and Baltimore City benefited from the inclusive public participation process and racial equity oversight incorporated in Senate Bill 23, the short-sighted and tragic decision to cancel the Red Line never would have happened.

And Baltimore City could have seen some of the remarkable renaissance I witnessed from the MARC train.

All Marylanders have a stake in developing a fairer transportation system in Baltimore and across our state. I thank the bill's sponsors for having the vision to insist that the full spectrum of our community, the NAACP and organized labor be part of that process. We need more than lip service to racial equity and the needs of people with disabilities. These needs are statewide.

Social service providers in Western Maryland, too, identify the lack of public transportation as a critical shortcoming in enabling low-income residents, already far behind the state's median income, get to workplaces where they can begin to climb the economic ladder.

Public transportation's constituency covers the expanse of Maryland's geography, politics, economics and culture. I know that many of my Western Maryland neighbors are fully supportive of this bill and its provisions.

Passing the Transportation Equity Act of 2022 will be a giant step in building a more cohesive, forward-looking Maryland. I urge you to issue a favorable report.

Thank you.