

Written Testimony SB 511 Health and Human Services Transportation Improvement Act of 2023

John F. Hartline, Executive Director, Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland

Thank you for allowing me to speak to you today in favor of SB511.

In 2017, the Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland (TCCSMD) working with the Community Transit Association of America (ATAA) performed a study on the most urgent needs for local transit in the Southern Maryland Region. That study group focused in on Non-Emergency Medical Transportation as the most important unmet need. This resulted in a group made up of two human services agencies, two county hospitals and the Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland moving forward to begin the Wheels2Wellness (W2W) Program with funds from MDOT and the Rural Maryland Council (RMC).

The group had four major objectives:

1. Provide transportation for patients who have no way to get to in-and-out hospital procedures and to follow-up visits.
2. Keep the “no-show” rate for follow-up patient office visits near zero. (under 2%)
3. Improve the patient’s outcomes by reducing the patient bounce-back rate.
4. Prove the program could save the hospitals more money than the transportation program cost.

After two years of start-up problems related to computer software, just about the time I was ready to give up. CRISP cost of care reports for the cohort of Wheels2Wellness patients from **Calvert Health Hospital showed a return on investment that was roughly 6-times the cost for transportation.**

Following that surprising outcome, I asked the TCCSMD Executive Board to apply more RMC RMPIF formula funds to the W2W program and TCCSMD staff applied for competitive RMPIF funds and local foundations to expand the program to Charles Regional Hospital.

After 4 years of experience, the Wheels 2 Wellness Program has continued to produce savings, but we have found there can be a wide standard deviation in the distribution of savings, but always positive results, in our pilot program.

My goal for this Bill SB511 is to scale up the W2W project and to operate it Statewide through the five Tri-County Councils to prove the program can save lives and save the healthcare providers money in all rural areas of the State of Maryland.

I ask for your support and invite you to add funds for other more urban counties as you see fit.

Thank you and I am happy to answer any questions.

John Hartline

hartline@tccsmd.org

240-682-3426