

February 21, 2023

The Honorable Melony Griffith, Chair
Senate Finance Committee
3 East, Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Guy Guzzone
Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
3 West, Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: SB0511 – Health and Human Services Transportation Improvement Act of 2023

Dear Chairwoman Griffith and Chairman Guzzone:

The Allegany County Chamber of Commerce appreciates the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of Senate Bill (SB) 511. Through our Transportation Committee, the Chamber has been working with community stakeholders and transportation providers to improve transportation access in Allegany County.

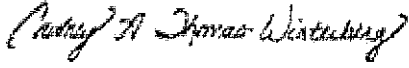
Allegany County, like many rural communities, has limited transportation options for those who do not have access to a reliable automobile. While public transportation exists, the existing fixed route service offers limited hours of operation, has inadequate reach in the most rural parts of our county, and can be difficult for those with disabilities and seniors that may have mobility issues and need door-to-door services or assistance with mobility aids. Cabs or other ridesharing services are limited and costly, but we know that reliable and affordable transportation access is essential to meet one's health and medical needs essential to daily living and quality of life.

Allegany County is fortunate to have several human service agencies in the County that offer transportation to help fill the gaps however, there are eligibility restrictions and most providers focus on providing rides to agency services and/or Medicaid eligible non-emergency medical transportation (NEMT) due to funding restrictions.

Senate Bill 511 establishes a Rural Non-Emergency Medical Transportation Program with an annual appropriation to support hospitals working with non-profit providers to address transportation gaps in rural communities to ensure eligible individuals can access needed medical appointments; increases funding for the Senior Rides Program to expand the successful volunteer transportation program to help elderly individuals maintain their independence, remain active in their communities, and access essential services, such as pharmacy and grocery stores; and establishes a State Coordinating Committee for Health and Human Services Transportation to develop a cooperative and coordinated approach to health and human services transportation in rural communities, which would further improve access to necessary services and support for individual in rural areas of the state.

For these reasons, the Allegany County Chamber of Commerce strongly urges your support of Senate Bill 511.

Sincerely,



Courtney Thomas-Winterberg
Transportation Committee Chairwoman



Juli R. McCoy
Executive Director

cc: Honorable Katherine Klausmeier, Vice Chair, Finance
Honorable Jim Rosapepe, Vice Chair, Budget and Taxation
Senate Finance Committee Members
Senate Budget and Taxation Committee Members
Allegany County Delegation