



NAACP

Maryland
STATE CONFERENCE

March 9, 2021

HB1204 | Transportation Equity Analyses and Assurances Act of 2021

Position | Favorable

TESTIMONY

Good afternoon committee members and colleagues, my name is Staci Hartwell. I am the co-chair of the NAACP Maryland State Conference, Environmental and Climate Justice Committee. As the NAACP's ECJ state chair, I have the privilege of representing the environmental and climate equity interests of our members and BIPOC residents in Maryland. As a vehicle of those voices, I am here today to ask you to support House Bill 1204, the *Transportation Equity Analyses and Assurances Act of 2021*, to guarantee that equity is a primary goal in the Maryland Transportation Plan.

Maryland's transportation sector is responsible for more than 40% of the region's carbon emissions. In addition to accelerating climate change, the emissions from motor vehicles greatly contribute to air pollution, which has been proven to cause, and further aggravate, health conditions such as asthma, other respiratory illnesses, and cardiovascular diseases.

These health impacts are especially concentrated in Black and low-wealth communities, who have been disproportionately exposed to toxic smog and air pollution. Achieving environmental justice and transit equity in these communities are deeply important. Especially at a time where our country is facing a public health crisis that is disproportionately killing these same communities.

Due to a long history of racist transit and housing policies, these communities also lack access to safe, clean and reliable transit options. The prioritization of equity, moving forward, will be crucial to addressing and overcoming the long-term impacts of policies that were not designed to serve all of the residents across the state of Maryland.

The passage of HB1204 will be instrumental to making equity a central goal in the formation and evaluation of transit plans. This bill will bring us closer to achieving equity in transportation, where all Marylanders are able to easily access transit, as well as reach their destinations in a safe, timely, and reliable manner. To do this, HB 1204 would create the *Commission on Transportation Equity*, composed not only of government officials, but also representatives from key equity stakeholders including from the *NAACP Maryland State Conference (MSC)*, *Disability Rights Maryland*, and *Casa de Maryland*. This Commission will ensure that transportation decisions are crafted with consultation and feedback from affected communities, analyzed for equity and disparate impact, and made more accountable and transparent to the public.

Equitable and accessible transportation is crucial to connecting people to good employment, affordable housing, healthcare, quality education, healthy food, entertainment and other services and opportunities that sustain and enrich Marylander's lives. Furthermore, a well-planned transportation system will be key to reducing Maryland's carbon emissions by increasing access to public transportation options, decreasing traffic congestion, and gradually shifting to cleaner,

more environmentally friendly, non-emitting vehicles, to confirm the incontrovertible necessity of an atmosphere free of greenhouse gases.

The future of Maryland lies within a clean energy economy with a robust and equitable transit system that benefits all Marylanders, regardless of race, income, zip code or ability. I urge legislators to submit a favorable report for House Bill 1204 to ensure a commitment to equity in the Maryland Transportation Plan.

Thank you.

Respectfully submitted,

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by

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