

**House Bill 1204 - Transportation Equity Analyses and Assurances Act of 2021  
(Transportation Equity Act)**

**POSITION: SUPPORT**

**Testimony of Ryan Green**

I strongly support House Bill 1204, sponsored by Delegate Sheila Ruth, and I urge the House Environment and Transportation Committee to issue a favorable report on this bill.

I work as a physical therapist in Baltimore City, and have worked in multiple locations within the city. That includes outpatient therapy in both Hampden and Canton. While working at each location, I have had many interactions with patients who need to use public transportation. In many cases, transportation poses a significant barrier to patient attendance and progression in therapy. The barriers I see include multiple indirect bus lines to travel within the city, significant delays in arrival, inconsistent timing, and poor access for those with mobility deficits. These deficits can be frustrating, debilitating, and at times, outright dangerous for my patients.

While working in Canton, I had a high number of patients (~30% of my caseload) that would travel from distant neighborhoods to receive therapy. Some came from the Middle East neighborhood north of Canton, and some came from Sandtown/Winchester neighborhood across the city. These patients were, for many reasons, underserved in their community, and thus forced to travel all the way to Canton to receive therapy.

Access to therapy in these redlined neighborhoods is severely limited with either no PT or limited/poor quality PT available. Thus, these people came to me in order to address the health concerns that prevented many of them from engaging with their communities, whether by work or by childcare. I've talked with these patients in depth regarding their transportation woes, and I have been shocked by the inequity present. In fact, it happened right outside my clinic window. We could see the bus stop for a busy MTA line that dropped off and picked up patients less than 20 feet from the clinic. The stop was little more than a sign; that is, nowhere to sit and nowhere to shelter. They would often wait for prolonged periods for the bus, which at best only came every half an hour. Many times, the bus would be delayed and the app designed to track bus movement would be grossly incorrect.

To give perspective, many of my patients suffer from chronic back pain, strokes, neck pain, arthritis, and in some cases, traumatic brain injuries. Some of them qualified for Mobility access, but many did not. Hearing from these patients that they would need to travel upwards of an hour and a half just to travel six miles in order to receive therapy has terrified me.

Passing this bill will go a long way towards addressing these concerns, and will help to give each person in Baltimore the value they deserve in our society.

Maryland has a shamefully long history of racist transportation policies, from highways built through and dividing Black communities to the cancelation of the Red Line route, urgently-needed access to jobs for residents in low-income, redlined communities in Baltimore and regional economy-transforming, transit-oriented-development (TOD). Equitable transportation will play a key role in dismantling systemic racism by:

- Increasing access to good jobs, schools, education, and food;
- Providing incentives for community economic development;
- Reducing smog, air pollution, and heat islands, which disproportionately impact Black communities

Transportation equity is also important for people with disabilities. Because many people with disabilities do not have the option to drive cars, lack of access to other modes of transportation disproportionately harms them. Without access to transportation, people with disabilities continue to be alienated from the economic mainstream. People with disabilities are twice as likely to live in poverty in part due to difficulty accessing jobs, education and medical care. Because many individuals with disabilities have increased health care needs, isolation can have a profound impact on quality of life, health, and safety.

The Transportation Equity Act requires:

- Equity as a primary goal in the Maryland Transportation Plan;
- MDOT to collect and analyze data on racial disparities and impact on persons with disabilities in the annual Attainment Report;
- Adding a representative from the Maryland State Conference NAACP to the Attainment Advisory Committee;
- Creation of a Commission on Transportation Equity as an independent transit monitor and evaluator;
- MDOT MTA to conduct transit equity analyses, cost benefit analyses, and outreach to affected communities before public hearings on any major service change;
- MDOT MTA to perform cross-modal equity analysis and planning;
- Increased transparency with annual reporting and service change analysis reporting.

Ultimately, there is a need for greater transparency, accountability and community input. Equity should not be an afterthought or a box to check. Real people's lives are impacted by transportation. All Marylanders, regardless of race, income, zip code, or disability, should have an equal right to the benefits of a well-planned transportation system.

**For these reasons, I strongly support HB 1204 and urge the Committee to issue a favorable report.**