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Ladies and gentlemen, now that various viewpoints have been shared with you there is an obvious urgency to getting your support in causing HB1204 to be passed. This bill insists that the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) make all of its future decisions that involve budgetary and service changes be done through the lens of equity. As one whose profession, the craft of preaching, demands we make things plain for anybody to understand, one might ask, Reverend, what do you mean when you say the lens of equity. The lens of equity means that the statement “what about me” is taken into account before anything significant is done. Title 6 was supposed to federally demand that MDOT provided protections for those who are not in the places of power and decision making about public transportation. But when you do not have any consequences for NOT doing what you have been asked to do, the powerful have a tendency to not inconvenience themselves with the “What about Me” voices and questions. Equity analysis will ask the questions, what about people who depend on public transit to get to the jobs that are vital to the pulse of the city and the state? What about them? Should the fact that the working-class live-in Park Heights or Sandtown Winchester or McElderry Park or Oliver affect the need for reliable public transportation? What about them? What about how crowded the bus stops seem to be? Is that a symbol of confidence in the public transit system, or the casualty of a reduction in service in certain neighborhoods? What about them? Using a lens of equity analysis says the public transportation system runs just as reliably in Charles Village as it does in Edmonson Village. It says that the subway stops at Mondawmin Mall and Pennsylvania Avenue are just as important as the subway stops at Johns Hopkins Hospital and the light rail and MARC train stops. Equity says that we realize fare riders fees are just a percentage of MDOTs revenue mix, but investment in the system should not depend on what zip code we’re talking about or the racial make-up of the ridership. If we want the economy of the region to improve it seems that we would strive to make access to the jobs equitable for anyone no matter what neighborhood they lived in. And if we want to function evenhandedly and unbiased in delivering public transportation our brothers and sisters with disabilities should be able to travel reliably, as well.

Ladies and gentlemen MDOT has not been totally transparent in how they collect and analyze the data that grades their effectiveness or lack thereof. They do not consider the differences and disparities of impact their poor service imposes on the lives of people of color and the lives of people with disabilities. There are no voices or perspectives from the communities affected by these inequalities and inconsistencies at the table. They don't conduct equity analysis in a cross-modal fashion meaning looking at everything they deliver as transportation. That way they can publish big equity improvements in in modes of travel that the people in need don't ride and hide the performance of poorly maintained systems the people ride every day. Delegate Sheila Ruth's bill isn't asking MDOT to provide the people with money, it's simply asking them to do what they're SUPPOSED to do. Provide reliable public transportation to everybody across the state no matter where they live in ALL the modes of travel they are responsible for. And the bill makes sure representatives of the people are on the right Advisory Boards and part of an independent commission to monitor and evaluate MDOT. This pandemic has yet exposed one more longstanding example of brokenness in our state, public transportation. Let us rally behind Delegate Sheila Ruth's Bill and begin the healing. I'm asking for a favorable report on HB 1204. Thank you.