

AMALGAMATED TRANSIT UNION LOCAL 689

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Statement of the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 689 **HB 1204 - Equity in Transportation Sector – Guidelines and Analyses** **(Transportation Equity Analyses and Assurances Act of 2021)** **Support with Amendment** **March 11th, 2021**

TO: Chair Barve and Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee
FROM: Brian Wivell, Political & Communications Director, ATU Local 689

At the Amalgamated Transit Union Local 689 we represent over 13,000 workers and retirees performing many skilled transportation crafts for the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA), MetroAccess, DASH, and DC Streetcar among others. Our union helped turn low-wage, exploitative transit jobs into transit careers. We became an engine for the middle-class of this region.

We strongly support HB 1204, but urge the Delegates to support amendments that would strengthen its aims by including transit workers in the study processes. We know firsthand that access to reliable, safe and affordable public transit means better jobs and a stronger economy. Access to high quality public transit isn't just about commute times and access to jobs, it's also about building sustainable communities. Public transit is the lifeblood of many neighborhoods and it's important that we're intentional about the impacts that changes to public transit will have on the communities that already live there. This country has repeatedly treated public transit, particularly buses, as if it was transportation for people of color and the poor. As such, it has been chronically underfunded and sidelined for the promotion of personal automobiles. We believe that HB 1204 will help to make this past history explicit, especially its past racial impacts, and help prevent the State of Maryland from repeating history.

Transit equity is something that this union has fought for over and over again. We've repeatedly been on the front lines of fights against service cuts and for the expansion of public transit. We also routinely partner with Labor Network for Sustainability and a host of other organizations to support their annual Transit Equity Day. Our members have spoken at community meetings, public hearings, and rallies.

Not even a few weeks prior to this hearing the Washington Post published a touching profile on one of our members. The piece focused on Howard Stokes, a Black Washingtonian who joined our union in 1945 and was one of the first Black streetcar operators for Capital Transit. Capital Transit was a thoroughly racist company to its core. Even though its buses and streetcars were desegregated, the company only hired white transit operators, forcing its Black workers into second class status. It was the organizing of Black transit workers, community organizations, and

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the government that finally helped to change Capital Transit's racist policies. Howard served the riding public for decades, later becoming a WMATA bus operator. We also believe that the Capital Transit case is a great example of how transit equity can't exist if the workers that move the buses and trains are mistreated, undervalued, or discriminated against. We know transit workers have a role to play in helping to promote transit equity because they already have.

With this spirit in mind, we encourage Delegates to support the following two amendments that would add transit worker representation to the formations laid out in the bill:

Advisory Committee:

Page 6, after Line 3

(XV) A REPRESENTATIVE OF A TRANSPORTATION LABOR
ORGANIZATION, AS DESIGNATED BY THE MARYLAND STATE AND D.C.
AFL-CIO

Commission on Transportation Equity:

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(IV) ONE REPRESENTATIVE OF A TRANSPORTATION LABOR
ORGANIZATION, AS DESIGNATED BY THE MARYLAND STATE AND D.C.
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We thank everyone for their time and urge all Delegates to support this important measure.