



Mar. 9, 2021

**Testimony on HB 1204
Transit Equity Act
Environment & Transportation Committee
Hearing date: March 11, 2021**

Position: Favorable

Dear Mr. Chairman and Committee Members,

Thank you for considering my testimony today. My name is Katherine, a resident of Baltimore, District 43. I am a member of the Sunrise Movement Baltimore, a movement led by young people fighting against the climate crisis. This testimony represents my support in favor of HB1204 The Transit Equity Act.

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.

Last fall, Baltimore almost had many of its bus lines cut. Fortunately, public outcry stopped this from happening. However, if we had this transit equity law in place beforehand, an analysis and outreach before such a major cut would likely have shown the disproportionate impact on low-income and communities of color and caused the cut to not be proposed. Maryland needs to consider the impacts their transit plans have on our communities, particularly those with less access.

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.

I encourage a FAVORABLE report for this important legislation. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Katherine Longabaugh
317 E 30th St
Baltimore, MD 21218
District 43