To the House Economic Matters Committee:

I'm Peter Ibik, President of Anytime Taxi in Montgomery County, Maryland. I'm submitting testimony about SB 0085. I'm supportive of a favorable decision, and of the bill as voted on unanimously by the Senate.

Anytime Taxi is a driver-owned cooperative in Montgomery County, organized as an LLC in 2015, and operational since 2018. We currently have a fleet of 12 wheelchair-accessible taxicabs. Our co-op was created by taxi drivers, with two distinct intentions: (1) to offer significantly improved transportation options for people with disabilities, and (2) to provide taxi drivers with fair and equitable fees and services.
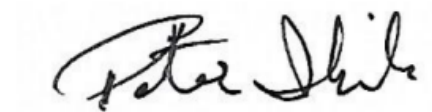
The transportation options for people with disabilities are very limited and difficult to utilize. Ride-sharing services such as Uber and Lyft do not provide transportation to people with disabilities. Taxi drivers formed this co-op as a way of providing high-quality, dignified options for transportation for people with disabilities.

Many taxi drivers are impoverished and are not in a position to acquire their own vehicles and licenses. Taxi companies have traditionally charged exorbitant fees to lease vehicles and licenses, and provide dispatching, insurance, and other services to taxi drivers. Driver-owned taxi co-ops are directly accountable to their driver-members, and operate on a not-for-profit basis, thus they charge much less and drivers can take home much more of their hard-earned fares.

The absence of a dedicated worker-owner cooperative statute in Maryland has been a major financial hardship for our cooperative. Worker-owned co-ops organized as LLCs in Maryland are seriously overcharged for their workers compensation premiums, since their members are presumed to be executive-level employees with relatively high salaries. Passing SB 0085 will solve this problem by providing worker co-ops with their own statute that is better suited to their needs.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,

Peter Ibik
President, Anytime Taxi