



**TECHNET**  
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INNOVATION ECONOMY

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March 5, 2024

The Honorable Marc Korman  
Chair  
House Environment and Transportation Committee  
Maryland House of Delegates  
Room 251  
House Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

*RE: HB 1447 (J. Lewis) - Motor Vehicles - Autonomous Vehicles - Standards, Requirements, and Prohibited Acts.*

Dear Chair Korman and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of TechNet, I write to offer comments on HB 1447 related to autonomous vehicles.

TechNet is the national, bipartisan network of technology CEOs and senior executives that promotes the growth of the innovation economy by advocating a targeted policy agenda at the federal and 50-state level. TechNet's diverse membership includes dynamic American businesses ranging from startups to the most iconic companies on the planet and represents over 4.2 million employees and countless customers in the fields of information technology, e-commerce, the sharing and gig economies, advanced energy, cybersecurity, venture capital, and finance. TechNet has offices in Austin, Boston, Chicago, Denver, Harrisburg, Olympia, Sacramento, Silicon Valley, and Washington, D.C.

The development and deployment of autonomous vehicles (AVs) offer the potential to increase equity by providing mobility-as-a-service and enable tremendous societal benefits by improving roadway safety through the reduction in frequency and severity of automobile crashes. AVs also increase access to transportation for all people, including people with disabilities, older adults, and others who cannot currently drive themselves. Further, AVs can significantly enhance the safety and efficiency of goods movement, create jobs, and help better meet consumer demand while promoting innovation and growth across various sectors of the economy. AVs may likewise mitigate other inefficiencies of current motor vehicle use, such as congestion.

TechNet is concerned that HB 1447 could unintentionally stifle innovation and impede the safety and other benefits of this technology. First and foremost, the bill contains a driver-in requirement that would make Maryland an outlier among the

24 other states that have enacted autonomous vehicle legislation. If enacted into law, Maryland would be the only in the country to enact a bill to require a driver in every autonomous vehicle. This requirement will stifle the testing and ultimate deployment of autonomous vehicles, as well as serve as a disincentive for future investments in Maryland. Other states have shown it is possible to foster the safe development of this type of technology without such restrictions.

Furthermore, autonomous vehicles can reduce the occurrence of vehicle accidents. According to 2022 National Highway Traffic Safety Administration data, 42,795 people were killed in vehicle crashes. Autonomous vehicles have the potential to remove the human driver that is usually the cause of events leading to a crash.

Additionally, the bill allows for a private right of action under Maryland's Consumer Protection Act. Private rights of action lead to frivolous lawsuits and take time and resources away from companies who could otherwise use those resources to enhance safety standards and innovation.

TechNet urges you and your colleagues to consider policies that will unlock the tremendous potential of autonomous vehicles. If you have any questions regarding TechNet's opposition to HB 1447 in its current form, please do not hesitate to reach out. We look forward to continuing these conversations with you.

Sincerely,

*Margaret Durkin*

Margaret Durkin  
TechNet Executive Director, Pennsylvania & the Mid-Atlantic