

MDOD_FIN_HB1481_FAV_03.25.25.pdf

Uploaded by: Anne Blackfield

Position: FAV

Carol A. Beatty, Secretary
Anne Blackfield, Deputy Secretary

Wes Moore, Governor
Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor



DATE: March 25, 2025

BILL: HB 1481 – Disability Services – Adapted Vehicle Access Pilot Program - Established

COMMITTEE: Finance

POSITION: Favorable

Dear Chair Beidle,

The Maryland Department of Disabilities (MDOD) is pleased to submit this letter of support for HB 1481, which would establish within MDOD a pilot program that would solicit donations of adapted vehicles, vehicle modification and adaptation services, and funds on behalf of eligible individuals.

Transportation is a critical component of community integration for people with disabilities. Adapted vehicles can at times be prohibitively expensive. Maryland does provide financial support to drivers with disabilities through the Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) and offers paratransit and accessible public transportation. However, some individuals may not be able to access these supports and services. MDOD believes this pilot program has the potential to not only connect individuals to a needed resource but will allow MDOD to further document the benefits of, and barriers to, accessible vehicles and transportation.

MDOD believes it would be possible to leverage activities currently carried out by its Maryland Assistive Technology Program (MDTAP) to support the pilot program proposed by HB 1481. MDTAP oversees the Assistive Technology Loan Program, which provides low-interest loans to individuals and their families to purchase assistive technology, including vehicle adaptations and adapted vehicles. MDOD would be able to identify eligible individuals for the pilot program from among those who were unable to qualify for a financial loan for an adapted vehicle. MDTAP also operates the Maryland Assistive Technology Reuse (MATR) website, which allows people to post information about assistive technology that they would like to donate for free to others. MDTAP could use this platform to facilitate donations of adapted vehicles.

MDOD supports the version of the bill that was passed by the House. In particular, we note the legislation, as it was amended, will give MDTAP the option of facilitating donations directly between donors and eligible individuals, without having to first take physical possession of the vehicles. This will minimize the expense, delays, and liability associated with a State agency having to transport, repair, store, transfer title, and/or enter the vehicle into State inventory.

I respectfully request a favorable report for this bill. Thank you for your ongoing support and consideration of Maryland's disability community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carol A. Beatty".

Carol A. Beatty, Secretary

217 EAST REDWOOD STREET, SUITE 1300, BALTIMORE, MARYLAND 21202

VOICE/TTY 410-767-3660 VOICE/TTY 1-800-637-4113 FAX 410-333-6674 EMAIL info.mdod@maryland.gov

HB 1481 Written Testimony - FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Audrey Sellers

Position: FAV

Finance Committee
HOUSE BILL 1481: Disability Services - Adapted Vehicle Access
Pilot Program - Established
March 25, 2025
Position: Support

Disability Rights Maryland (DRM) is the Protection & Advocacy agency for Maryland, mandated to advance the civil rights of people with disabilities. DRM (DRM) submits this testimony in support of House Bill 1481, which creates the Adapted Vehicle Access Pilot Program. DRM submits this testimony in support of HB 1481.

HB 1481 proposes the Adapted Vehicle Access Pilot Program (the "Program") to provide adapted vehicles to individuals who use mobility aides in Maryland. The Maryland Department of Disabilities (MDOD) would be tasked with implementing and overseeing the program. Responsibilities include selecting eligible participants, with priority given to those residing in areas with limited public transportation, and soliciting donations of vehicles, modification services, and funds from individuals and corporations. The Program would run for five years, with the option to extend or expand in 2030. Its impact will be assessed and evaluation will look at how access to vehicle modifications impacts independence, mobility, job opportunities, and dependency on public subsidies.

Reliable transportation is essential for quality of life and plays a crucial role in determining whether people can fully participate in their communities. Individuals with mobility impairments face significant barriers to transportation, which severely limit access to employment, education, healthcare, shopping, social opportunities, and more. Owning an adapted vehicle can significantly expand these opportunities.

The implementation of HB 1481 could be a transformative move toward enhancing the lives of those who use mobility aides throughout the state, particularly in areas lacking adequate public transit, such as rural areas. Individuals living in areas with limited public transit would receive priority in this pilot program. Individuals with mobility impairments living in rural and other underserved transit areas often face isolation, unable to engage in community life due to limited transportation options.

It is time to expand access and ensure that individuals who use mobility aides in rural, suburban, and metropolitan areas alike have this vital opportunity. For these reasons, DRM supports House Bill 1481 and requests a favorable report. We thank you for your consideration of this bill.

For more information or questions about our position, please contact me at AudreyS@DisabilityRightsMD.org or 443-692-2507.

Respectfully,
Audrey Sellers (she/her)
Advocate
Disability Rights Maryland

Maryland Catholic Conference_FAV_HB1481_SenateCros

Uploaded by: Diane Arias

Position: FAV



March 25, 2025

House Bill 1481

**Disability Services - Adapted Vehicle Access Pilot Program – Established
Senate Finance Committee**

Position: Favorable

The Maryland Catholic Conference (MCC) is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals, and numerous charities combine to form our state's second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government.

House Bill 1481 establishes the Adapted Vehicle Access Pilot Program to provide adapted vehicles to individuals who require mobility aid; requiring the Department of Disabilities to implement and administer the Program, request, apply for, and facilitate certain donations for the Program, study the impacts of the Program, and report on the Program on or before December 1, 2028.

This program would expand access to adaptive vehicles for individuals with disabilities by leveraging charitable donations to offset costs, ensuring greater mobility and independence. Many individuals face financial barriers to acquiring adaptive technologies, which are essential for safe and accessible transportation. By prioritizing those in areas with limited public transit options, this initiative would provide life-changing mobility solutions while upholding rigorous safety and quality standards. With adaptive equipment ranging from \$50 for minor modifications to \$80,000 for fully equipped vehicles, this initiative would make essential transportation more attainable for those in need.¹

Rooted in the Catholic call for solidarity, this legislation affirms the inherent dignity of individuals with disabilities by ensuring they have the resources necessary to live with greater participation in society. The Church teaches that all people, regardless of ability, are created with equal worth and deserve access to the support and services that allow them to flourish. Providing adaptive mobility solutions is a moral obligation to uphold human dignity, ensuring that no one is left isolated due to financial or logistical barriers.

For these reasons, the Maryland Catholic Conference asks for a favorable report on **HB 1481**.

¹ <https://www.nhtsa.gov/vehicle-safety/adapted-vehicles#cost-savings-1486>

Thank you for your consideration.

HB1481-FIN-FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Nina Themelis

Position: FAV



BRANDON M. SCOTT
MAYOR

*Office of Government Relations
88 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401*

HB1481

March 25, 2025

TO: Members of the Senate Finance Committee

FROM: Nina Themelis, Director of Mayor's Office of Government Relations

RE: House Bill 1481 - Disability Services - Adapted Vehicle Access Pilot Program - Established

POSITION: Support

Chair Beidle, Vice Chair Hayes, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) respectfully requests a **favorable** committee report on House Bill (HB) 1481.

HB 1481 would establish the Adapted Vehicle Access Program within the Maryland Department of Disabilities (DOD) to assist individuals living with disabilities who require mobility aid with acquiring adapted vehicles. The purpose of the program is to support individuals who use wheelchairs and require adapted vehicles to drive but do not qualify for other adapted vehicle programs offered by the DOD. HB 1481 would prioritize individuals without access to adequate public transportation or other mobility aid programs to close the gaps in vehicle accessibility needs for individuals living with disabilities. As the State struggles with a budget shortfall and plans to reduce funding for the DOD, providing other ways for persons with disabilities to work and live independently is a priority. This program would be fulfilled by vehicle donations and funds from private corporations, public corporations, and the federal government.

HB 1481 would benefit people with disabilities without relying on DOD funds by creating a pilot program to provide adapted vehicles for persons who use wheelchairs for mobility where such persons cannot otherwise afford them. Such vehicles can be expensive, but particularly for those living in remote locations are essential to ensuring meaningful accessibility for individuals living with mobility related disabilities. The program would last for five years, during which time the bill calls for a study and report as to the program's effectiveness. Through this report, the program would provide invaluable information to both the public and private sector in terms of best practices for providing accessible transportation.

Because of the above reasons, the Baltimore City Administration respectfully requests a **favorable** committee report on House Bill 1481.

Senate - SponsorTestimony Mobility HB1187 (final)t

Uploaded by: Terri Hill

Position: FAV



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

SUPPORT

HB1481- Disability Services – Adapted Vehicle Access Pilot Program – Established

March 25, 2025

Chair Beidle, Vice Chair Hayes, and members of the Finance Committee,

HB1481 creates a pilot program for providing Marylanders who are ambulatory disabled adapted vans. Mobility is more than the ability to move freely about a limited physical space unrestricted. In its fullest meaning, it includes the ability to independently move between physical spaces and localities. By providing adults who depend on wheelchairs long-term or permanently with vehicles adapted to allow them to drive, they will be able to move with greater independence and attain associated benefits. It's an imperative, bipartisan bill that passed the house with overwhelming support (**137 - 1**).

While existing programs such as the Maryland Department of Disabilities (MDoD) AT Low-interest Financial Loan Program provide some individuals access to adapted vehicles, many individuals who would benefit are ineligible due to income thresholds or other restrictive criteria. (MDTAP Adapted Vehicle Funding Guide 2023. (2023).

[https://mdod.maryland.gov/mdtap/Documents/Accessible - Adapted Vehicle Funding Guide 2023 \(1\).pdf](https://mdod.maryland.gov/mdtap/Documents/Accessible - Adapted Vehicle Funding Guide 2023 (1).pdf)

HB1481 bill will help individuals not qualifying for other programs gain access to the adapted vehicles they need to live with greater independence and participate with fewer limitations in the workforce and their communities. The pilot program would prioritize individuals residing in areas with limited access to public transportation and is structured to be cost-effective and sustainable, leveraging donations of vehicles, modification services, and funding from public and private sources. Similar initiatives in other states have successfully improved mobility for people with disabilities while minimizing costs to taxpayers.

The bill also requires MDoD to conduct an impact study to determine if the pilot succeeds in:

- Expanding employment opportunities
- Increasing financial stability
- Reducing reliance on caregivers
- Reducing reliance on paratransit services
- Decreasing dependency on public subsidies
- Enhancing independence and thereby improving quality of life

Transportation remains one of the most significant barriers to employment, healthcare, daily activities, and independence for individuals regardless of their level of ability or disability, with individuals with disabilities being twice as likely as those without disabilities to lack access to transportation, significantly limiting their opportunities and independence. (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2019). Barriers to employment for people with a disability. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

<https://www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2020/barriers-to-employment-for-people-with-a-disability.htm?>); (Data Analysis | Bureau of Transportation Statistics. (2011). https://www.bts.gov/archive/publications/freedom_to_travel/data_analysis?)

HB1481 is a step towards addressing a significant deficiency in our goal of ensuring every Marylander access to opportunity to meet their full potential. I urge a favorable report.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Terri Hill".