



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

March 3, 2020

House of Delegates – Environment and Transportation Committee

House Bill 1440 - Maryland Transit Administration – Disabled Reduced Fare Program – Opioid Treatment Program Patients

Position: Favorable

Chairman and Members of the Committee:

For the record, my name is Delegate Melissa Wells and I thank you for allowing me to appear before the committee today to testify in Support of House Bill 1440.

The proposed legislation would establish a mechanism for providing MTA monthly bus passes to patients enrolled in addiction treatment programs who are in good standing with those programs. In areas such as Baltimore City with a high degree of concentrated poverty, transportation has been identified as a barrier to treatment. House Bill 1440 would give patients an incentive to continue treatment by eliminating the transportation barrier and would be another tool to help curb the opioid crisis we are experiencing in Baltimore, and throughout the state of Maryland.

Current law entitles such patients to receive passes at the discounted rate of \$21.20 per month, yet there are important issues that make these provisions of little real effect.

- Patients must typically take the bus downtown each month to apply, pay for, and receive the pass.
- Very few patients for whom Addiction Treatment Programs do the required paperwork actually go to the MTA retail facility and receive their pass.
- Often it is touch and go with continuing treatment and research shows that transportation time and cost is one impediment in the long road to recovery.
- If a patient misses one day due to lack of funds, he or she is very unlikely to return to treatment.
- The bus pass convenience is not a small but quite significant step and a positive one as we need to do all we can to keep patients in programs.
- To eliminate this crippling obstacle, we are proposing that the MTA do the following:
 - **Permit Addiction Treatment Programs to grant such bus passes to patients in good standing without cost to the MTA for as long as they were in the program.**

It is critically important that we permit Treatment Programs to issue the passes at their own facilities to the patients, obviating any need for patients to make a trip to the MTA each month, and remove this critical barrier to treatment.

With this, I would ask for a favorable report and that my panel be able to provide you with additional information.

Delegate Melissa Wells