



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Testimony of Senator Jill P. Carter
In Favor of SB399 - Maryland Transit Administration –
Disabled Reduced Fare Program for Opioid
Treatment Program Patients – Modifications
Before the Finance Committee
on February 3, 2021**

**Madam Chairwoman, Mr. Vice chair, and Members of the
Committee:**

The purpose of this bill is to remove a remaining institutional barrier that those with opioid addiction face when seeking treatment for their addiction by increasing access to public transportation. This bill would allow opioid treatment centers to issue reduced fare passes to qualifying individuals on-site.

The current state of the law allows qualified individuals in opioid treatment programs to obtain reduced fare transportation passes. However, the law currently requires all qualified applicants to travel to the MTA Reduced Fare Office in Baltimore to obtain those passes. The only change this bill seeks to make is how qualified individuals are able to access these reduced fare passes.

In 2020, the General Assembly responded to this problem by allowing those engaged in opioid treatment to qualify for reduced fare transportation passes. That policy was meant to help those individuals to continue seeking treatment and have the opportunity to re-establish themselves. The reduced fare allows individuals to travel to and from their treatment centers more easily, reducing the number of people who would stop getting treatment because they could not physically get there.

As a body, we have already acknowledged that there is value in allowing those in opioid treatment centers to access reduced fare passes. This bill alters the enacting language to make sure the policy is implemented in such a way that it reaches as many people as possible who are in the groups of people that we initially sought to assist.

This bill only changes the law enacted in 2020 by allowing individuals to access the reduced fare passes at their treatment centers, rather than having to travel to the MTA Reduced Fare Office in Baltimore. Traveling to the Baltimore office can be a daunting burden for those seeking transportation assistance, especially for those who live far from the city- such as on the Eastern Shore or in Western Maryland.

Being able to access reduced fare passes on-site means that those in treatment would quite literally get the help they

need to walk out the door when leaving their treatment centers. This seems to be the most logical policy decision, as individuals in treatment already have a standing obligation to get to and from their treatment centers as a part of their program. There is no additional travel needed to obtain the passes.

This bill does not alter who would qualify for the reduced fare passes. Applicants would still need to satisfy all the existing requirements in order to be eligible and approved for the reduced fare passes, including a note from a physician that the pass is necessary.

The only substantive change to the policy by this bill is increased accessibility to reduced fare passes for those fighting addiction.

For these reasons, I urge a favorable report on SB 178 from this committee.

Respectfully,



Jill P. Carter