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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

HB 73 – State and Local Government and Private Employers – Teleworking

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Delegate Carol L. Krimm

When Governor Hogan issued the Stay At Home Executive Order in March 2020 there were many challenges associated with that Order but two positive results were a significant reduction in traffic congestion and much better air quality as a result of less greenhouse gas emissions. Telework is the main reason for these positive results.

Soon after the Stay At Home Order was imposed Chairman Marc Korman discussed the direction of our subcommittee Transportation and the Environment. We decided that expansion of telework was worth investigating and the work began. Our subcommittee had a briefing in August 2020 at which time we gathered information from stakeholders and experts in traffic management about teleworking.

The Maryland Institute of Transportation at the University of Maryland has data for all roads across the state. Their data shows that if there is a 5%-15% reduction in traffic during peak travel times then we may have free-flow traffic. Since I-270 is heavily traveled that percentage is closer to 15%. The chart Maryland Traffic Volume Comparison: 2019 vs.2020 attached to this testimony shows the reduction was as high as 50% in traffic after the issuance of the Stay At Home Order.

Common sense efforts to expand telework may generate significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. Secretary Ben Grumbles said “(T)here is no denying the decrease in greenhouse gas emissions was a direct effect of people staying at home and traveling less, so teleworking is the ‘wave of the future.’”

HB 73 requires state and local government to develop and implement a teleworking policy and identify employees eligible for teleworking. While 48% of federal employees in the Washington metro telework only 14% of state and local government employees do. (National Capital Region, Transportation Planning Board). The private sector is also encouraged to participate and future tax credit or grant opportunities for small businesses to develop these policies may be available.

Traffic reduction and better air quality are two proven positive results of expanding telework policies. Also are healthcare benefits for people who are positively impacted by better air quality like children with asthma.

While not every job is conducive to telework, many jobs in state government are as we have seen during the pandemic. Teleworking may be an incentive for employees to work for the state government and the state may see a reduction in operations costs for leasing buildings etc.

I encourage you to support HB 73. We need to take bold steps post-pandemic and take advantage of opportunities made apparent during the pandemic.