

SB0399 MHAMD FAV.pdf

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Position: FAV

**Senate Bill 399 Maryland Transit Administration – Disabled Reduced Fare Program for
Opioid Treatment Program Patients – Modifications**

Finance Committee

February 3, 2021

Position: SUPPORT

The Mental Health Association of Maryland is a nonprofit education and advocacy organization that brings together consumers, families, clinicians, advocates and concerned citizens for unified action in all aspects of mental health, mental illness and substance use. We appreciate this opportunity to present testimony in support of Senate Bill 399.

SB 399 allows Opioid Treatment Programs to issue identification cards to participating patients to receive reduced Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) transit fare.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on opioid use and opioid-related deaths in Maryland and across the United States. Between January 2020 and June 2020, there was a 9.1% increase in fatal drug overdoses and alcohol-related deaths, 90% of which resulted from opioid use. The Maryland Department of Health and the Maryland Opioid Operational Command Center confirmed that the pandemic has been and is exacerbating substance use disorders, particularly due to social isolation, disruption of support, restricted access to care, and economic distress.¹

While it is often said that addiction does not discriminate, data shows that those without a stable income are more likely to face addiction. Substance use disorder rates are twice as high in unemployed persons than those who are employed.² The US Department of Health and Human Services has also reported that Medicaid recipients are more likely to be prescribed opioids at higher doses and longer durations.³

At current rates, a monthly full fare MTA pass is \$74.00, compared to the \$22.00 reduced fare.⁴ By allowing Opioid Treatment Program participants to receive reduced fare, Maryland can actively reduce part of the financial barrier to treatment. For these reasons, MHAMMD supports SB 399 and urges a favorable report.

¹The Washington Post, (2020, September 23). *Overdoses and alcohol-related deaths rising during pandemic.*

https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/overdoses-and-alcohol-related-deaths-rising-during-pandemic/2020/09/23/1c96d684-fd9e-11ea-b0e4-350e4e60cc91_story.html

²Addiction Center, (2020, December 8). *How does addiction impact low-income Americans?* <https://www.addictioncenter.com/addiction/low-income-americans/>

³National Institute on Drug Abuse, (2017, October 25). *Addressing the opioid crisis means confronting socioeconomic disparities.*

<https://www.drugabuse.gov/about-nida/noras-blog/2017/10/addressing-opioid-crisis-means-confronting-socioeconomic-disparities>

⁴Maryland Transit Administration, (n.d.). *Regular Fares.* <https://www.mta.maryland.gov/regular-fares>

Councilman Glover - Support - SB399.pdf

Uploaded by: Brocato, Barbara

Position: FAV



Councilmember Antonio Glover
13th District
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January 28, 2021

The Honorable Delores Kelley, Chair
Senate Finance Committee
3 East, Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: Senate Bill 399 - Maryland Transit Administration - Disabled Reduced Fare Program for Opioid Treatment Program Patients - Modifications

Dear Chair Kelley and Members of the Senate Finance Committee:

I wish to offer my enthusiastic support for SB399, which aim to allow licensed Opioid Treatment Programs (“OTPS”) in good standing to issue discounted disability monthly MTA bus passes on site to their patients. Numerous studies have found that treatment accessibility is critically important to the recovery process. If a patient cannot get to treatment (e.g., because it is too far, they do not have money for the bus, etc.), then he or she will miss days, which, at the very least, disrupts their treatment, but most likely effectively ends it. At an OTP, patients must generally present themselves for medication daily.

As we look for several ways to support the community affected by opioid addiction, simply providing them a bus pass to be able to receive treatments that will help them to achieve recovery is the bare minimum that the state could do to help fight this crisis. This will prevent patients from relapsing and contributing to the drug problem that is already prevalent in parts of the city.

For the record, Turning Point is an extremely well-run facility. Under the direction of Rev. Williams, Turning Point has managed to maintain an impeccable record of no violations over the past seven years. Turning Point is in my district, and I extend my full support to the purpose and mission of Turning Point, and their ability to issue these critically useful bus passes on site, just as prescribed in SB399. My belief is that they are part of the solution, not part of the problem.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Antonio Glover". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Councilmember Antonio Glover

Turning Point Clinic - SB399 - Maryland Transit Ad

Uploaded by: Brocato, Barbara

Position: FAV



DATE: Wednesday, February 3, 2021

BILL: Senate Bill 399 – Maryland Transit Administration - Disabled Reduced Fare Program for Opioid Treatment Program Patients - Modifications

COMMITTEE: Senate Finance Committee
The Honorable Delores Kelley, Chair

POSITION: FAVORABLE

On behalf of Turning Point we submit the following testimony in **SUPPORT** of Senate Bill 399. This bill will make important modifications to the Disabled Reduced Fare Program for Opioid Treatment Program Patients to ensure the intent of the legislation that passed last year, SB705, is achieved.

Specifically, SB399 will require the Administration to allow opioid treatment programs to certify eligibility for and issue identification cards and monthly transit passes to qualifying patients; and require rather than authorize participating opioid treatment programs to issue the identification cards and transit passes to patients on-site.

The intent of SB705 and the testimony provided by its proponents during the 2020 Session was that OTPs would be able to issue disabled reduced fare passes directly and in their entirety onsite.

This was intended to eliminate patients having to make a separate trip to the MTA Transit Baltimore office for purposes of getting their ID picture taken, which can easily be done at the OTP.

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 anytime soon. 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.

SB399 will allow OTPs, that wish to participate, to issue bus passes including the “certification of eligibility” and the “issuing of identification cards” on site for use by patients who qualify for MTA’s Disabled Reduced Fare Program.

To eliminate this crippling obstacle, we are asking for a FAVORABLE report on Senate Bill 399.

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Uploaded by: Carter, Jill

Position: FAV



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

Maryland Catholic Conference_FAV_SB399.pdf

Uploaded by: Sheahan, Molly

Position: FAV



ARCHDIOCESE OF BALTIMORE † ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON † DIOCESE OF WILMINGTON

February 3, 2021

Senate Bill 399
Maryland Transit Administration – Disabled Reduced Fare Program for
Opioid Treatment Program Patients – Modifications

Senate Finance Committee

Position: SUPPORT

The Maryland Catholic Conference represents the public policy interests of the three Roman Catholic (arch)dioceses serving Maryland: the Archdiocese of Baltimore, the Archdiocese of Washington, and the Diocese of Wilmington, which together encompass over one million Marylanders.

Senate Bill 399 would allow opioid treatment centers to issue ID cards and metro passes to patients so they can receive the Disabled Reduced Fare for public transit.

The Conference supports legislation that ensures access to quality, affordable, and life-giving health care for all. Every person has a basic right to adequate health care arising from the Church's teaching on the sanctity and dignity of human life. Mental and behavioral health is integral to the health of the entire person, and services that treat substance use disorders are imperative to a healthy society.

Approximately 1 in 10 individuals prescribed an opioid will develop an opioid use disorder (*National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2020*). The opioid crisis has dramatically intensified the need for services in Maryland that aid in recovery and healing. As such, providing reduced public transit fare and ID cards through opioid treatment centers will help patients travel to and from treatment, be successful in recovery and build a healthy, productive lifestyle.

For these reasons, the Conference appreciates your consideration and urges an unfavorable report on **Senate Bill 399**.

SB0399 - FIN - MTA - Disabled Reduced Fare Program

Uploaded by: Westervelt, Patricia

Position: INFO



Larry Hogan
Governor
Boyd K. Rutherford
Lt. Governor
Gregory Slater
Secretary

February 3, 2021

The Honorable Delores Kelley
Chair, Senate Finance Committee
3 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis Maryland 21401

RE: Letter of Information – Senate Bill 399 – Maryland Transit Administration - Disabled Reduced Fare Program for Opioid Treatment Program Patients – Modifications

Dear Chair Kelley and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) takes no position on Senate Bill 399 but offers the following information for the Committee's consideration.

Senate Bill 399 requires the MDOT Maryland Transit Administration (MDOT MTA) to allow Opioid Treatment Centers (OTCs) participating in the Reduced Fare Program for Persons with Disabilities to certify eligibility for, and issue, Reduced Fare Identification (ID) cards on site. The bill further requires MDOT MTA to submit a report on this effort by December 2021.

Overseeing the benefits provided under the Reduced Fare program is a complicated process and one that MDOT MTA takes very seriously. This process includes: confirming appropriate documentation is presented (such as government issued identification) by individuals seeking benefits, ensuring all needed records are maintained in accordance with HIPAA and State of Maryland Information Technology (IT) Security Policy requirements, verifying applications with the customer database to prevent system duplicates, requiring attestation and documentation by qualified professionals of proof of disability or other eligibility status, and maintaining controls to prevent fraud or abuse of the process.

Allowing a third party to certify and issue Reduced Fare ID cards will fragment oversight of the system and increase the opportunity for fraud and abuse of the Reduced Fare system. Examples of fraudulent activities could include, but are not limited to, customers receiving a duplicate IDs, improper access to card-making materials, or sharing information without an individual's permission. Most importantly, MDOT MTA relies on a single common database for managing participant enrollment and verification. This common database cannot be shared across third-party entities as the information is limited to the individual, their representative, or health care providers with the individual's permission. The State of Maryland IT Security Policy regarding personally identifiable information (PII) and Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) requirements strictly control this personal information access and use. MDOT MTA undergoes rigorous internal and external auditing to ensure the integrity of the Reduced Fare Program, which would become complicated if the responsibility of certifying and issuing ID cards were delegated to any third party.

The Honorable Delores Kelley
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Furthermore, creating a system to support and operate third party verification will be costly. MDOT MTA staff would be needed to facilitate setup, implementation, training, review of and oversight of work performed, compliance with IT Security and HIPAA policies, as well as periodic audits of activities and processes. Several staff members would be required for ongoing implementation and supervision of activities to ensure established requirements are being followed. Additional staff would be required depending on the number of OTCs participating in the program and the number of participating patients. A recent search of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) web site identified over 100 centers within a five- mile radius of Baltimore. If just those treatment centers were to participate, costs would exceed \$2 million in the first year alone. Costs in subsequent years could reach over \$2 million annually.

To ensure the effective, safe, and accountable operation of the Reduced Fare program, it is not in the best interests of MDOT MTA, the State of Maryland, the Reduced Fare Program beneficiaries, and other stakeholders, to delegate the responsibilities of the Reduced Fare Certification Office to any entities or personnel outside direct accountability to MDOT or the State of Maryland.

The Maryland Department of Transportation respectfully requests that the committee consider this information while deliberating Senate Bill 399.

Respectfully submitted,

Dave Myers
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