



## **Policy Foundation of Maryland**

**Committee:** Appropriations, Environment & Transportation

**Testimony on:** HB01336 - "[Greater Baltimore Transit Governance and Funding Commission](#)"

**Sponsor:** Del. Bridges

**Organization:** POLICY FOUNDATION OF MARYLAND

**Person Submitting:** Sarahia Benn, Executive Dir. of Policy Foundation, Member of MD Legislative Coalition, Transform MD Transportation Coalition

**Position:** Favorable

**Hearing Date:** March 10, 2022

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for allowing testimony today in support of HB1336. Policy Foundation of Maryland is a grassroots organization focused on State and County level legislation and policies that impacts marginalized communities and veterans affairs.

Transportation and environment legislation is of massive importance to these communities particularly due to how impacted these communities have been historical and currently. The Maryland Legislative Coalition is an association of activists - individuals and grassroots groups in every district in the state. We are unpaid citizen lobbyists and our Coalition supports well over 30,000 members.

HB1336's purpose is to address the structural challenges in the current centralized governance structure of the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) which make maintaining and improving transit performance difficult. As one of the leaders in the Greater Baltimore & Metro Region who is seeking to reform the way public transportation is governed and financed, HB1336 is one step in that process. Instead of having comparative metropolitan areas wherein the transit system is robust, reliable and thriving the current result of Maryland's transit in the Greater Baltimore/Metro region is unreliable public transportation system which further disadvantages many of its users who are already negatively impacted by structural racism, poverty, and marginalized by other economic factors. This discourages ridership growth and puts the region at a competitive disadvantage for future economic growth.

Current system cons:

- lack of significant expansion and improvement in the system in over 20 years (1997)
- MTA buses and trains have some of the highest breakdown rates in the nation which means riders can not depend on the services
- lack of local participation and in planning and funding decisions
- MTA is the only one of the 50 largest transit agencies in the country that is part of a state department of transportation without a board of directors, decision-making lies solely with the governor.

HB1336 is simple and straightforward. It creates a governance and funding commission representative of key regional and state stakeholders to answer key questions on how to create a new Baltimore Regional/Metro Transportation Authority. With such informed findings from the commission, the General Assembly will then be able to create legislation that is based on concrete findings. Ultimately, the current system must be transformed and creating that authority to transform is a critical step for improving and expanding transit service, increasing oversight, and accountability, and bringing additional local and federal funds for transit to the region.

For these reasons, we urge you to vote favorably for HB1336

**Amendment:** The GBTGFC Commission should also include one transit advocate/expert representative from Harford County, and one transit advocate/expert from Howard County. Each shall provide unique transit perspectives that will add to commission.

For these reasons we urge you to vote **FAVORABLY** for **HB1336**.

Respectfully submitted,



Sarahia Benn

(Policy Foundation of Maryland, Member of Maryland legislative Coalition, Transform MD Transportation Coalition)

[Sarahiabenn@gmail.com](mailto:Sarahiabenn@gmail.com)

**(Dedicated to Women's History Month)**

“What’s the world for if you can’t make it up the way you want it?”—[Toni Morrison](#)