



# POSITION STATEMENT

## TESTIMONY PRESENTED TO THE HOUSE ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

### HOUSE BILL 120 – RAILROAD COMPANIES - CONDEMNATION AUTHORITY - APPLICATION

Sponsor: Delegate Anne Healey

January 27, 2022

**DONALD C. FRY**  
**PRESIDENT & CEO**  
**GREATER BALTIMORE COMMITTEE**

#### **Position: Oppose**

House Bill 120 would preclude an entity that owns or operates a railroad powered by a magnetic levitation propulsion system (Maglev) from acquiring property by condemnation. This authority would remain unchanged for all other railroad companies.

House Bill 120 is an attempt to make it more difficult or impossible to achieve the goal of high-speed rail in the Northeast Corridor, particularly between Baltimore and Washington. Rather than taking steps to impede progress, the State should remove barriers to progress. The Greater Baltimore Committee endorses the efforts of Baltimore Washington Rapid Rail (BWRR) to help resolve the long-recognized need for high speed in this corridor.

The Northeast Corridor encompasses a population of over 50 million people. Delays on our highways have tripled in the last 30 years. The Baltimore-Washington region features 52 percent of the worst highway bottlenecks in the country and auto travel is expected to increase by 22 percent by 2040. The Baltimore Washington SCMAGLEV (superconducting magnetic levitation) project would connect urban centers thereby reducing congestion and expanding opportunities for business growth.

Meanwhile, our railways are operating on more than 100-year-old infrastructure with alignments not suitable for high-speed travel. Freight and passenger rail share the same tracks. Approximately 75 percent of all weekday commuter rail ridership in the U.S. is on the Northeast Corridor. Rather than relying exclusively on incremental steps to patch the existing system, it is time for an integrated bold approach to help solve our nation's transportation problems.

Maryland must encourage transportation and infrastructure like the Baltimore-Washington SCMAGLEV to usher the Northeast Corridor into the future and bring the region to the forefront of technology and transportation in the United States.

This bill is inconsistent with a key tenet in *Gaining the Competitive Edge: Keys to Economic Growth and Job Creation in Maryland*, a report published by the GBC that identifies eight core pillars for a competitive business environment and job growth.

**Superior transportation infrastructure with reliable funding mechanisms.** An essential prerequisite of a competitive business environment includes well-funded and maintained highway, transit, port and airport infrastructure that provides reliable and efficient options to move people, goods and services.

Investment in high-speed rail systems is a key component in the creation of a comprehensive transportation network.

**For the reasons stated above, the Greater Baltimore Committee urges an unfavorable report on House Bill 120.**

*The Greater Baltimore Committee (GBC) is a non-partisan, independent, regional business advocacy organization comprised of hundreds of businesses -- large, medium and small -- educational institutions, nonprofit organizations and foundations located in Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Carroll, Harford, and Howard counties as well as Baltimore City. The GBC is a 67-year-old, private-sector*

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*membership organization with a rich legacy of working with government to find solutions to problems that negatively affect our competitiveness and viability.*

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