



Senate Finance Committee
WRITTEN TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 0023 (HOUSE BILL 141)
Transportation Equity Act

Disability Rights Maryland (DRM) is the state's protection and advocacy system, mandated to advance the rights of people with disabilities. DRM strongly supports SB 23.

Consumers for Accessible Ride Services (CARS) is an organization of transit riders with Disabilities dedicated to improving transportation access and options for those with disabilities. DRM and CARS are dedicated to advancing the civil rights of people with disabilities.

This legislation is significant to people with whom we work as it impacts Marylanders with disabilities' access not only to transportation, but also to education, health care, employment, housing, and more. While Disability Rights Maryland focuses on persons with disabilities, we recognize the intersectionality with persons of color. Our legacy of race and disability discrimination has driven our patterns of segregation and exclusion. Our transit system reflects our segregationist history.

People with disabilities are twice as likely to live in poverty in part due to a lack of access to transportation connecting them to jobs, education, and medical care. Without access to transportation, people with disabilities continue to be alienated from the economic mainstream. The National Council on Disability identifies transportation as a major barrier to community inclusion for people with disabilities, affecting access to employment, education, health care services, and social activities. This is especially true in Baltimore, where a 2006 study by the Baltimore Metropolitan Council found that 43 percent of the population has a self-reported travel-related disability; a 2010 customer survey conducted by Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) found that the average income for persons with disabilities using paratransit services is \$10,000-20,000 per year; and a 2012 American Community Survey found that over 30 percent of Baltimore City's households are non-vehicle, the majority of which are low income.

Some people with disabilities do not leave home because of transportation difficulties.¹ Because many people with disabilities and many low-income households do not have access to cars, they are disproportionately harmed by a lack of public transportation. Over the past year, Maryland's paratransit service, MobilityLink, which serves people with significant mobility impairments, has performed substantially below its goals, and reported its worst on-time performance in more than five years, further alienating people with disabilities from participating equally in our communities.² Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, people with disabilities have suffered

¹ U.S. Department of Transportation: Bureau of Transportation Statistics, *Transportation Difficulties Keep Over Half a Million Disabled at Home* (April 2003), available at https://www.bts.gov/sites/bts.dot.gov/files/legacy/publications/special_reports_and_issue_briefs/issue_briefs/number_03/pdf/entire.pdf.

² Sims, B., *Lack of MobilityLink Drivers Leaving Baltimoreans Stranded for Hours*, WBALTV (Sept. 27, 2021), available at <https://www.wbalTV.com/article/lack-of-mobilitylink-drivers-leaving-baltimoreans-stranded-for-hours/37757696#>. MTA MobilityLink's August on-time performance rate was 67.5 percent, which dropped to 59.2

disproportionately in regards to health, economic security, social isolation, and more.

The Transportation Equity Act requires data collection and analysis of the impact of transportation on people with disabilities and people of color. SB 23 is long overdue remedial legislation. While a person's health, income and opportunity should not be defined by where they live, without the equity analysis required by this proposed bill, Maryland cannot expect its discriminatory patterns to change. We must account for the impact of our public services. Disability Rights Maryland heartily supports SB 23 and is happy to assist as much as possible in developing and furthering the proposed Commission.

Respectfully submitted,

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percent in September 2021. *See* MDOT MTA Performance Improvement, MobilityLink On-Time Performance, MTA, *available at* <https://www.mta.maryland.gov/performance-improvement>.