



HB1336 – Greater Baltimore Transit Governance and Funding Commission

Testimony before Senate Finance Committee

March 31, 2022

Position: Favorable

Madam Chair, Mr. Vice Chair and members of the committee, my name is Virginia Smith, and I represent the 750+ members of Indivisible Howard County. Indivisible Howard County is an active member of the Maryland Legislative Coalition (with 30,000+ members). We are providing written testimony today in support of HB1336, which would establish the Greater Baltimore Transit Governance and Funding Commission. We appreciate the leadership of Delegate Bridges in sponsoring this important legislation.

Currently, the Greater Baltimore area leaders have little to no say how the transit system is funded, managed, or updated, instead it is left up to the Governor and their appointee. The Mayors and County Executives around Baltimore should be involved in this process because they will have a better understanding of what their constituents need when it comes to public transportation. The proposed Greater Baltimore Transit Governance and Funding Commission will add these leaders to the process.

Meanwhile, Maryland and the Greater Baltimore area are already experiencing the impacts of climate change with more severe storms and hotter days. Adding to that, prices keep rising for all aspects of owning your own car, with the price of new and used cars increasing, as well as gas, and maintenance increasing. Adding these factors together demonstrates why it is necessary to ensure the transit system in the state is top of the line, so all people can get where they need to go when they need to be there using environmentally and economically friendly means. This bill starts in a good place by creating the Greater Baltimore Transit Governance and Funding commission with the goal of reviewing the findings of the Baltimore Regional Transit Governance and Funding Study published in August of 2021 and making recommendations regarding the need for changes to the funding and governance of the transit system in the area. It will also try to find ways to ensure equitable distribution in governance and funding. All of this will hopefully lead to improved performance, possible increase in funding, new mass transit options, and an increase of accessibility for the people in the greater Baltimore area.

In the end, a Governance Commission will provide a seat at the table for the leaders of the Baltimore area. It should also lead to increased usage and decreased personal use of cars (increases CO₂ output and adds to the impacts of climate change), while saving residents money.

For these reasons, we support HB1336.

Thank you for your consideration of this important legislation.

We respectfully urge a favorable report.

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