



*The Senate of Maryland*  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

TESTIMONY OF SENATOR SHELLY HETTLEMAN  
SB 625 – TRANSPORTATION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES –  
TRANSPORTATION NETWORK COMPANIES – EMPLOYEE REQUIREMENTS

Mobility is a program in the Baltimore area that provides people with disabilities critical transportation services. Constituents who have disabilities are completely reliant on this service to meet their mobility needs for doctors' appointments, jobs, and everyday living. Our office has been contacted repeatedly over the years by these constituents, and those calls for help have been increasingly more frequent as they have experienced frustrating and sometimes dangerous, circumstances stemming from untimely and unreliable service.

One young man, who is blind, was left stranded on a college campus when his MTA Mobility ride never showed up. He had to navigate logistics and arrange for his own transportation, which finally came hours later. Another constituent reported being dropped by their in-home care provider due to lateness resulting from so many canceled scheduled appointments. Last week a constituent got very ill with a Multiple Sclerosis flare-up resulting from long exposure to the heat and stress of bouncing up and down on a MTA van. The ride should have been a 5-8 minute trip, but ended up taking over 110 minutes due to challenges with drivers, poor routing, and logistics planning. Along with being uncomfortable and sick from being overheated, the constituent was mortified because her bladder emptied during the unplanned, lengthy ride. These are just a few examples of the indignities, frustrations, and unacceptable treatment of our constituents. We must do better.

To their credit, the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) has been accessible and responsive to our constituents' complaints, holding a town hall and meeting with us and our colleagues many times over the years. This bill is an attempt to enable the MTA to respond to our constituents' very real transportation needs.

During COVID, MTA experienced a dramatic decrease in the number of Mobility drivers. With these recent operator shortages, SB 625 is a necessary step towards expanding comprehensive and accessible transportation options for people with disabilities in Maryland. As the Maryland Transit Caucus has made us aware, nearly one third of people with disabilities routinely face inadequate access to transportation.

Current law requires that MTA obtain fingerprints from their drivers for criminal background checks, a provision that Transportation Network Companies (TNC's),

companies like Uber and Lyft, will not do. This bill would modify the provision in law, consistent with what is required by the Public Service Commission, and enable a TNC to use a background screening tool to obtain a full adult criminal history check for convictions in Maryland and all jurisdictions in the United States.

Specifically, the bill will:

- Exempt transportation network companies from doing a complete criminal history background check through the Criminal Justice Information System Central Repository of the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services.
- Exempt transportation employees that provide transit service to disabled persons under contract with the MTA from the fingerprinting requirement within the governing Transportation Article.
- Require that transportation providers run an annual background screening on all transit operators, including an operator's entire adult history.
- As amended, require that any background screening provider be audited and accredited by companies covered under the Fair Credit Reporting Act.

SB 625 will expand access to transportation for people with disabilities, improving their ability to participate in communal activities and independently access resources such as groceries, employment, healthcare appointments. The bill provides an innovative and effective way to ensure that Marylanders with disabilities have access to reliable and safe transportation services.