



Maryland
Hospital Association

March 7, 2022

To: The Honorable Shane E. Pendergrass, Chair, House Health & Government Operations Committee

Re: Letter of Support – House Bill 1243 – Public Health – Rural Nonemergency Medical Transportation Program

Dear Chair Pendergrass:

On behalf of the Maryland Hospital Association's (MHA) 60 member hospitals and health systems, we appreciate the opportunity to support House Bill 1243. Access to reliable transportation is a common barrier for individuals seeking medical care. It can also be a factor that contributes to longer lengths of stay in hospitals if a patient does not have access to transportation to their next level of care. Marylanders with limited transportation had even greater difficulties during the COVID-19 pandemic getting to and from medical appointments.

This statewide challenge contributes to longer ED wait times in two ways: patients may wait in an emergency department for transportation out of the hospital, and patients unable to be discharged from an inpatient bed can cause hospital throughput issues. Additionally, lack of available nonemergency transport options means patients cannot get to critical appointments. This can delay care and lead to avoidable hospital visits and costly emergency ambulance transport.

The Maryland Department of Health (MDH) funds the Non-Emergency Medical Transportation program, which is administered by local jurisdictions and available only to Medicaid participants. There are significant programmatic limitations, and different requirements across counties and restrictions by vendor availability, distance, and hours of operation. While helpful, they are insufficient to address the scope of medical transportation needs for all Marylanders.

HB 1243 will offer patients and hospitals another tool to help get patients home or to the next level of care as soon as they are cleared to do so.

For these reasons, we urge a *favorable* report for HB 1243.

For more information, please contact:
Erin Dorrien, Vice President, Policy
Edorrien@mhaonline.org