



Testimony

HB 491

Appropriations Committee

February 21, 2023

Position: FAVORABLE

Dear Chairman Barnes and Members of the Appropriations Committee

The Community Development Network of Maryland (CDN) is the voice for Maryland’s community development sector and serves nearly 200 member organizations. CDN—focuses on small affordable housing developers, housing counseling agencies and community-based non-profits across the state of Maryland. The mission of CDN is to promote, strengthen and advocate for the community development sector throughout Maryland’s urban, suburban and rural communities. CDN envisions a state in which all neighborhoods are thriving and where people of all incomes have abundant opportunities for themselves and their families.

HB 491 - Establishes a Commission to Study the formation of a Baltimore Regional Transit Authority; requiring the Commission to conduct a comprehensive study of establishing a Baltimore Regional Transit Authority; and requiring the Commission to submit a report of its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly by October 31, 2024

According to a study by Johns Hopkins University and the Baltimore Transit Equity Coalition, public transit provides relatively low-cost access to jobs, food, and healthcare, while also reducing pollution and greenhouse gas emissions by taking cars off the roads and increasing physical activity. Despite these benefits, public transit in Baltimore often fails to serve the people. This is especially concerning since low-income people of color represent the majority of transit-users in Baltimore, many of whom during the COVID-19 pandemic were classified as “essential workers”.

For too long, the Baltimore region has ignored the region’s need for a first-class transportation system that serves industry and moves people to work, school, services, and amenities in the region. There has been little regard for the need for the overall health and growth of the region. Instead, the state redesigned the bus system without regard to high concentrations of transit dependent tax paying community members.

Further study of a Baltimore Regional Transit Authority will move us closer to a region with improved economic development. It is long overdue that we work toward a more equitable transit future where community members throughout the region have the opportunity to prosper.

Submitted by Claudia Wilson Randall, Executive Director