



HOWARD COUNTY OFFICE OF COUNTY EXECUTIVE

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Delegate Ben Barnes, Chair
House Appropriations Committee
House Office Building, Room 121
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: **TESTIMONY OF SUPPORT: HB 491** - Commission to Study Establishing a Baltimore Regional Transit Authority

Dear Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Chang, and Members of the Committee,

Howard County **SUPPORTS** House Bill 491 - Commission to Study Establishing a Baltimore Regional Transit Authority. I commend Delegate Bridges and others in their proposal of this bill that will establish this exploratory body to study establishing a Baltimore Regional Transit Authority in response to the recommendations proposed in a recent report on regional transit governance from a Baltimore Metropolitan Council (BMC) workgroup.

Both HB 491 and HB 794 arise from the work of BMC's Transit Governance and Funding Workgroup. Last year, the General Assembly passed HB1336 which formed a legislative commission to study the governance and funding of MTA. That bill was vetoed by Governor Hogan. BMC formed this workgroup last July to address the issues raised in HB1336. Members were appointed from four of our jurisdictions, as well as the legislature, the business community and labor. The ideas in these bills represent the collective ideas of a cross section of regional leaders and they come from a truly regional and collaborative process. As Chair of the Baltimore Metropolitan Council Board and on behalf Mayor Scott, County Executive Olszewski, and County Executive Pittman I am proud to offer the support of our local governments for this legislation.

All our communities expect bold leadership from elected representatives, but they also expect a voice in deliberative, transparent, and accountable decision-making process. The cancellation of the Red Line blocked funding, growth and opportunity that would have helped firm up the economic foundation of communities in the Baltimore region for decades to come. Our system here in Maryland allowed this decision to go unchecked. The oversight structure outlined in these bills would provide an important guardrail, with stakeholders from communities across the region building consensus on all major transit decisions. Local communities have a seat the table at every successful transit agency in the country. We've fallen behind, but it's not too late. These bills provide a path for setting a new standard in transit governance and finally delivering for our communities on this.

I welcome your support and urge a favorable report on HB 491 and HB 794.

All the Best,

Calvin Ball
Howard County Executive