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Legislative District 25
Prince George's County

Ways and Means Committee

Subcommittees

Racing and Gaming

Revenues

Chair

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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Favorable Testimony

HB252: State Highway Administration - Highway Cleanup - Records and Reporting

Chair Barve, Vice Chair Stein and Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee, I am grateful for the opportunity to testify in support of HB252. The Maryland Department of Transportation's state street sweeping program divides all counties in the State into shared Districts. For example, District 3 is a bi-county plan that includes Montgomery County and Prince George's County. In the case of District 3, visual evidence repeatedly suggests that the State roads and ramps in Montgomery County are generally cleaner and freer of litter and other debris, as well as better maintained than those in Prince George's County. In speaking with colleagues from different counties across the state, they each express similar concerns about the state of their county's roads, ramps and bridges. This legislation would offer a remedy to any concerns raised that street sweeping and litter abatement by MDOT and SHA have been unevenly applied across counties or not done in entirety. It mandates that the Maryland Department of Transportation post regular calendars and scheduling notices of their cleaning cycles of all State roads under their purview.

Increased visual litter and trash along State highways and ramps as you leave one county and enter into another creates an impression that impacts a county's reputation, attractiveness, and its property values. Trash and litter attract vermin and disease, clog drains, impact culverts, pollute our waterways and discourage private investment. Visible litter and trash along state highways and ramps, suggests neglect. And in the case of state roads, ramps and bridges, accountability for that impression of neglect rests with the State.

Information on the highway and street cleaning procedures and schedules, including those for litter abatement, is currently unavailable to the public. This bill establishes a procedure and a process for the maintenance, updating and posting of both street sweeping and litter clean-up schedules, processes and procedures for State roads, and will ensure that the public has access to this information. This will increase transparency and accountability in regards to the distribution of MDOT-SHA resources across the State.

Speaking on behalf of District 3, since the introduction of this Bill in 2022, I have held monthly meetings with representatives from MDOT to address these perceived discrepancies. The discussions have been candid, open and informative, but thus far have not resulted in any substantive structural change when it comes to public reporting and resource allocation. MDOT exposed during these meetings that of the 3,424 lane miles under the purview of MDOT in District 3, Prince George's County accounts for 1,797 lane miles and Montgomery County, 1627 **or 170 lanes miles less**. Yet, Montgomery County receives an appropriation of \$610 per lane mile higher than Prince Georges County. That translates into an appropriation of nearly \$1 million higher than Prince George's county to clean their roads, bridges and ramps, and cleared of litter. Combined with the evidence that the highways and roads under MDOT's

cleaning program are visibly dirtier and more filled with litter in Prince George's County than in Montgomery County, this has led to a chorus of hundreds of residents who now support this legislation to hold MDOT more accountable for better transparency and communication around its street cleaning program, policies and procedures.

MDOT already offers a customer Care Service System as well as maintains an internal schedule of their street cleaning program. We are asking that these be made publicly available, that complaints are not simply received, but that their status be tracked, closed and posted, and that MDOT make publicly available updates related to their street cleaning schedules and follow up. Ideally, MDOT should also provide accessible information about how cleaning is generally scheduled, tracked, confirmed and enforced, as well as information about their budgets for State road cleaning for the purposes of accountability, transparency and independent review of the distribution of street cleaning resources and their application across counties.

This legislation promotes better communication between the department of transportation and Maryland residents and supports the allocation of the additional resources that may be needed to make this happen. For these reasons, I urge you to vote favorably on HB252.

Sincerely,
Delegate Nick Charles
District 25

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nick Charles". The signature is written in a cursive style with a stylized "N" and "C".