

TONY BRIDGES
Legislative District 41
Baltimore City

Appropriations Committee



The Maryland House of Delegates
6 Bladen Street, Room 350
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3283 · 301-858-3283
800-492-7122 Ext. 3283
Tony.Bridges@house.state.md.us

THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

To: The Honorable Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee
From: Delegate Tony Bridges, Legislative District 41
Re: **Support** - House Bill 1049 - Transportation - Assaults on Public Transit Operators- Report
Date: March 2nd, 2023

Chair Barve, Vice-Chair Stein, and members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to present House Bill 1049. This legislation focuses on the continued and worsening problem of assaults on transit operators.

Assaults on transit operators and transit station managers are not a new problem and for years, this General Assembly along with those in other states have considered legislation to strengthen penalties against those who put the operators and our communities at harm. The rate of security events reported to the National Transit Database has increased 17 percent on average annually between 2010 and 2020. That number includes an increase in transit worker assaults, which have increased approximately fourfold since 2009, according to the Federal Transit Administration. We also know that the number of assaults has anecdotally worsened since the global pandemic, especially in the case of many operators who must enforce rules and protocols on the vehicle.

This year, I worked with stakeholders to take a step back and to look at the problem of assaults from a wider lens to evaluate assaults across all transit in Maryland, from Ocean City Transit to Garrett County, and to the mass transit systems of WMATA and MTA.

This legislation would require the MD Transit Administration (MTA) to submit an annual report with the number of assaults on operators and transit station managers on all transit in the state, including the locally operated transit systems (LOTS). The report must include the nature of the

assault, the mode of transit involved, the location of the assault, whether the police were involved, and the outcome of any investigation.

The bill also requires that the data be compared to two other states and provide an analysis of current transit industry best practices to prevent and mitigate assaults. This report would be sent to county and state decisionmakers annually.

Lastly, the bill outlines that the initial report shall include data from the last five years to identify trends or patterns, conduct an evaluation of assault prevention and mitigation technology and policies for each transit system operating in the State, recommendations to improve technology or policies, and an evaluation of the feasibility of establishing a statewide local transit safety officer who would provide assault prevention/mitigation guidance.

Larger systems like the MTA and WMATA have the resources to employ a full-time safety officer, who oversees and identifies ways to improve safety of employees. This is not the case for many of the 20 locally operated transit systems who are resource strapped, especially considering inflation.

This bill is essential to shedding light on the prevalence of assaults, which jeopardizes the safety not only of drivers and transit station managers, but to the riders who rely on this public service. It will also identify what gaps exist and what best practices should be implemented. Unions and other advocates for transit safety should not have to rely on press clippings and Google search to get this information.

For these reasons and others as you will hear from other stakeholders, I respectfully request your support.