



Susan O'Neill, Chair

Charlotte Davis, Executive Director

Testimony in Support of
Senate Bill 511 – Health and Human Services Transportation Improvement Act of 2023
House Health and Government Operations Committee
Tuesday, March 28, 2023

The Rural Maryland Council supports Senate Bill 511 – Health and Human Services Transportation Improvement Act of 2023 as amended. This bill will repeal funding caps on the amount of grants that may be awarded by the Maryland Transit Administration under the Maryland Senior Rides Program and the Job Access and Reverse Commute Program and establishes the State Coordinating Committee for Health and Human Services Transportation to examine the transportation needs of residents of the State who are elderly, have a disability, or require transportation to access jobs, medical and other health-related appointments.

Routinely the Rural Maryland Council (RMC) has received requests to fund health related transportation projects through their grant programs. Examples of these include the purchase of vehicles to take patients to dialysis; support the development of computer dispatch software to aid in non-emergency medical transportation; and support salaries and wages of staff that intake and coordinate health transportation needs. The rise in demand for these requests led RMC to partner with the Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland this past fall to lead three Transportation Health Care Roundtable meetings between healthcare and transportation providers to determine how non-emergency health transportation can be improved in the State.

The research and findings generated from these roundtables showed that there is a lack of coordination between the transportation and healthcare sectors. Based on National Statistics, there are at least 76,000 to 82,000 Marylanders who will miss at least one (most likely more) medical appointment a year. 1 out of 5 of these missed medical appointments are due to transportation problems. Additional findings from the roundtables show that there is a need to develop a flexible route system (versus fixed route), support on demand services, and take a more regional approach to support the program.

Earlier this Session, the Committee passed the companion bill, HB596, in the same posture. The Council strongly believes that the provisions included in Senate Bill 511 will help in alleviate the challenges found in the non-emergency Health and Human Services Transportation sector. The Rural Maryland Council respectfully requests your favorable support of Senate Bill 511.

The Rural Maryland Council (RMC) is an independent state agency governed by a nonpartisan, 40-member board that consists of inclusive representation from the federal, state, regional, county and municipal governments, as well as the for-profit and nonprofit sectors. We bring together federal, state, county and municipal government officials as well as representatives of the for-profit and nonprofit sectors to identify challenges unique to rural communities and to craft public policy, programmatic or regulatory solutions.