

Town of Bladensburg

Council Members

Ward I

Trina Brown

Kalisha Dixon



Mayor

Takisha James

Council Members

Ward I

Marilyn Blount

Carrol McBryde

January 16, 2024

The Honorable Senator Guy Guzzone
Chairman
Budget & Taxation Committee
Miller Senate Office Building
3 West
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: **Town of Bladensburg Support of SB 0079: State Finance - Prohibited Appropriations - Magnetic Levitation Transportation System**

Dear Chairman Guzzone,

My name is Takisha James, and I serve as Mayor of Bladensburg, located in Prince George's County, Maryland. I want to thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in favor of Senate Bill 0079, cross-filed in the House as HB 0170 State Finance - Prohibited Appropriations – Magnetic Levitation Transportation System. I am writing today on behalf of the Town Council and our nearly 10,000 residents to ask for your support of SB 0079, which Senator Washington sponsors.

The Town of Bladensburg lies directly along the proposed Superconducting Magnetic Levitation (SCMaglev) system route from Washington, DC to Baltimore. While my community has several concerns around safety, human and environmental impacts, and long-term impacts on our historic buildings, which date back to the 1700s, as well as recently constructed buildings and homes, we understand this train may come to fruition. With this in mind, I ask you to strongly consider protecting Maryland taxpayers from the unknown financial risks that can arise with such a project like this. The project developer, Baltimore-Washington Rapid Rail, has communicated publicly and repeatedly that this project will be privately funded and not rely on government funding.

The truth is this project has already benefitted from taxpayer dollars, with the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) award of \$27.8 million by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA). To build public trust in the developer, it would be most helpful for them to also testify in support of SB 0079. This would be a strong demonstration of their integrity and show taxpayers that we can trust them and give credence to their claim that we will never be expected to foot the bill for this project at any time. On behalf of our community, I am asking you to help ensure the project developer keeps their word by moving this bill forward during the current legislative session.

The strength of the American economy is in allowing the consumer market to dictate which businesses succeed or fail. Looking through the lens of history, there have been times when we have witnessed the unthinkable. In 2008, for example, the federal government had to bail out the auto industry and Wall Street banks with billions of taxpayer dollars. The reality is that unimaginable situations can happen, and the unexpected does occur.

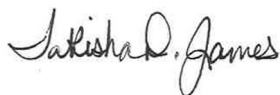
The automobile and banking industries have had deep roots in the American economy for over 100 years, and many of those years have been hugely profitable. To see these well-established industries proven vulnerable when crisis strikes should serve as a lesson to us. In learning from these examples, I have to question how a newly-introduced technology that has not yet experienced success in the U.S. market can stand on its own and guarantee profits in the future.

This bill does not delve into whether one is for or against the SCMaglev. For Maryland, it simply ensures our tax dollars will not be spent for any phase of this project. I believe elected officials must protect our residents from future financial hardship with a project like the SCMaglev. SB 0079 will go a long way toward protecting residents of the Town of Bladensburg, Prince George's County, and the entire state of Maryland by ensuring taxpayers are not left with a financial deficit should the developer decide to walk away from it or be unable to continue funding it in the future.

I want to thank each committee member for the opportunity to express my support for this legislation. I also want to applaud Senator Washington for his leadership in seeking to codify and for bringing this issue back again to the committee for action and for the protection of Maryland residents. Again, I ask the committee to please support SB 0079.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Takisha D. James".

Takisha D. James
Mayor, Town of Bladensburg