



Statement of the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 689 SB 505 – Public Utilities - Transportation Network Service - Assessment Cap Increase February 15th, 2024

TO: The Honorable Brian Feldman and Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

FROM: Matthew Girardi, Political & Communications Director, ATU Local 689

ATU Local 689 strongly supports SB 505 and urges the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee to issue a favorable report. This bill is a commonsense measure for raising revenue for the State of Maryland and holding rideshare companies accountable.

At Local 689, we represent over 15,000 transit workers and retirees throughout the Washington DC Metro Area performing many skilled transportation crafts for the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA), MetroAccess, DASH, and DC Streetcar among others. Our union helped turn low-wage, exploitative transit jobs into transit careers. We became an engine for the middle-class of this region.

Likewise, 9,000 of our members are hardworking WMATA employees. As we have heard many times this year, WMATA has stated it is facing an unprecedented \$750 million fiscal cliff brought on by inflation and the end of federal relief funds. Additionally, we have seen proposals for drastic cuts to transportation across the state, as the Transportation Trust Fund is facing a serious structural deficit. Our members are in danger of being repaid for their service through a pandemic and a rise in violence and antisocial behavior with wage freezes and layoffs.

As Governor Moore said in his state of the state address, it is time that we look for new ways to fund transportation. We believe that this bill is one part of that process. Transportation Network or Rideshare service companies have largely been allowed to operate while directly undercutting public transportation and exploiting workers in the process.

Local 689 knows that some of our members even drove for companies like Uber and Lyft. Unfortunately, their experiences were all too similar: having to pay for car upkeep, increased insurance costs, and gas prices. Crucially, they also saw decreasing compensation for their trips driven even while fares for the riding public increased. On any given trip, these companies take the majority, if not upwards of 60 percent of the fare, despite drivers being categorized as supposed independent contractors and receiving no benefits.

Local 689 supports SB 505 because the Union knows that these companies are posing a direct threat to public transit, are overcharging consumers, and underpaying their workers. They have the funds to spare and should be appropriately assessed per trip. Doing so would shore up funds for vital transportation infrastructure whether it be WMATA, MTA, the purple line, or commuter bus services.

We thank Senator Kramer for introducing this necessary measure and urge the committee to issue a favorable report.