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**HB 1199 - Transportation - MobilityLink Paratransit Service Improvements - Study
House Environment and Transportation Committee
February 29, 2024**

SUPPORT

Donna S. Edwards

President

Maryland State and DC AFL-CIO

Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 1199. My name is Donna S. Edwards, and I am the President of the Maryland State and DC AFL-CIO. On behalf of the 300,000 union members in the state of Maryland, I offer the following comments.

HB 1199 requires the Maryland Transportation Institute at the University of Maryland to conduct a study on the Maryland Transit Administration's ADA MobilityLink Paratransit service. This study is required to issue recommendations to improve the paratransit service and share its findings with the Governor, General Assembly, and County Executives within the MobilityLink service area.

In 2023, the U.S. Attorney's Office issued the results of their investigation of MobilityLink paratransit service and found violations of the Americans with Disabilities Act.¹ For years, MTA has contracted out its paratransit services to private contractors like MV Transit that have treated workers and riders poorly.² The paratransit system in Maryland is clearly failing to meet the full needs of paratransit riders and workers.

It is essential that the State studies the issue thoroughly and takes all parts of the problem into consideration. HB 1199 tasks the Maryland Transportation Institute with conducting the study. This outside independence is important and ensures that MTA is not tasked with investigating itself. HB 1199 also requires studying not only rider concerns on all ADA performance metrics, but also requires workforce concerns, including: turnover rate, workplace injury rates, average wages and benefits, and morale.

For the future of paratransit in Maryland, we urge a favorable report on HB 1199.

¹ Bryan P. Sears, "U.S. Attorney: Maryland paratransit system does not comply with ADA; lawsuit threatened." Maryland Matters. July 19, 2023.

² Daniel Zawodny, "Bedbugs and other reasons why MobilityLink drivers want a better contract." Baltimore Banner. August 23, 2024.