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Health and Government Operations
Committee

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Health Occupations and Long Term Care

Public Health and Minority
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House Chair

Joint Committee on Program Open Space
and Agricultural Land Preservation

THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Sponsor Testimony in Support of HB156 – Transportation - Electric Bicycle Rebate and
Voucher Program – Establishment**

Hearing Date: February 8, 2024

Thank you, Chair Korman, Vice-Chair Boyce, and members of the Environment and Transportation Committee. I am Delegate Robbyn Lewis here on behalf of HB156, that will help low- and moderate-income Maryland families to afford electric bicycles, or “e-bikes.” This bill will help the state achieve its goals of electrifying the transportation sector and making the sector more equitable.

Before describing what this bill does, it’s important to highlight the importance of bicycles, including e-bikes as a mode of transportation. They are not just for rich, healthy, physically-able white guys in lycra shorts; they are for everyone – including elders, the disabled, adults hauling children or groceries - who has somewhere to go. E-bikes can help reduce greenhouse gas emissions and traffic congestion. According to the Federal Highway Administration, in 2017 about 60% of all trips in privately-owned vehicles are less than 6 miles. E-bikes are perfect for those short trips.

In terms of racial equity, evidence shows that African Americans are the fastest growing segment of bike riders.

E-bikes look like regular bikes, with pedals and handlebars, but they have a small electric motor that can be used to go faster, maintain speed with less effort, or go uphill. This “electric assist” is perfect for people who are older, who have a physical limitations such as breathing challenges like asthma, or who have disabilities. E-bikes are the next frontier in equitable, energy-smart transportation.

HB156 has a modest fiscal note. The bill as written includes a mandated appropriation of \$100,000 in FY25. Going forward, it has a modest fiscal impact of around \$200,000 per year.

This bill follows the lead of places like Denver, Colorado, and Austin, Texas, which have launched programs to make e-bike ownership more accessible. It creates a rebate program for low- and moderate-income households – who need access to more transportation options – to afford to buy an e-bike. Across U.S. cities like Philadelphia, African Americans are using rental e-bikes at a greater rate than white, affluent residents. Yet, ownership of these bikes remains out of reach. This bill will fix that.

In closing, thank you for your consideration. I respectfully request a favorable report for HB156.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Lewis', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Delegate Robbyn Lewis