

February 22, 2024

HB0170

The Honorable Marc Korman, Chairman
Environment and Transportation
House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

The Honorable Ben Barnes, Chairman
Appropriations Committee
House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: HB0170 State Finance and Procurement - Prohibited Appropriations - Magnetic Levitation Transportation System

POSITION: **OPPOSE**

Dear Chair Korman, Chair Barnes, and Members of the House Environment and Transportation Committee and Appropriations Committees.

I am Joe Gaskins, Chairman of the Prince George's Contractors and Business Association representing over 3,000 small, women and minority businesses located in the Maryland who collectively would be damaged by the passage of HB0170.

The Prince George's Contractors and Business Association has provide strong leadership and advocacy for issues that enhance the opportunity for small, women and minority businesses to exist and grow. PGCBA was established in 1989, and has 35 years of experience in fostering small and medium-sized, women and minority businesses. Our Mission is to assure that the businesses that we represent have a fair, equitable opportunity to create wealth and employ citizens within our communities. This includes access to vehicles that provide capital and resources. This Bill eliminates a possible resource in their development and could impede their access to a lucrative opportunity.

We wish to share with you our support for the Baltimore-Washington Rapid Rail high-speed rail project that will connect Baltimore to Washington D.C. in 15 minutes and will provide \$4 billion in economic opportunities to their businesses.

Personally, as a community activist and entrepreneur, I see first-hand the multitude of benefits this transformative transportation system would have on the region. I'm excited about the possibilities for investment and employment for businesses throughout our region, bolstering the economic futures of thousands of residents through employment.

I have been fortunate to have in-depth conversations with Baltimore-Washington Rapid Rail about their plans to develop the MAGLEV system equitably. Making sure that women and people of color have equitable access to the multitude of opportunities associated with this project is crucial to aligning with our state's ambition of building a brighter future for all Marylanders.

BWRR is not asking, and has pledged not to ask, for state funds in developing the project. This means HB0170 is a bad solution to a non-existent problem. Additionally, it sends a frightening message to future generations that we have no qualms making short-sighted decisions before they even have a chance to weigh in, an affront to their autonomy. They must have every tool at their disposal to fight the climate crisis and build the transportation system they want. I ask that the committee not take a viable option off the table.

At this time, I ask that the committee submits an unfavorable report on this bill.

Sincerely,

Joseph Gaskins
President & Chairman of the Board
Prince George's County Contractor's & Business Association
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