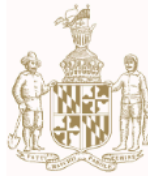


KAREN LEWIS YOUNG  
*Legislative District 3*  
Frederick County

Committee on Education, Energy,  
and the Environment



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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

The Honorable Senator Beidle, Chair  
The Honorable Senator Klausmeier, Vice Chair  
Finance Committee  
Maryland Senate  
Annapolis, MD

February 7th, 2024

**Testimony in Support of SB331: Task Force to Study Paratransit in Maryland**

Chair Beidle, Vice Chair Klausmeier, and esteemed members of this committee,

I come before you seeking your aid in resolving a challenge that often goes unnoticed: paratransit service. Paratransit is a door-to-door demand-response service that is essential to getting older adults and people with disabilities to medical appointments and other locations; paratransit thus has a positive effect on the overall health of the elderly and disabled while allowing them to remain in their homes. My bill will establish a task force to study gaps in service and funding as well as make recommendations about how those can be improved.

Why is this bill necessary? Currently, the State offers a small amount of funding via the Specialized Statewide Transportation Assistance Program (SSTAP). This funding has not changed in 16 years while counties contribute more and more to try to meet the needs of the residents. With the level of growth we are experiencing in Frederick County comes a comparable growth in the need for paratransit services. We have worked to help users to access taxis to supplement demand as well as worked to access additional grant funding. Even so, Frederick County anticipates needing to deny more than 10,000 requests this fiscal year.

Frederick County is not alone in experiencing issues in meeting demand. Thousands of Marylanders use paratransit everyday and more than 186,000 trips were performed across the state last year. In June of last year, the U.S. Attorney's Office found the paratransit services in Anne Arundel County, Baltimore City, and Baltimore County was also struggling to meet demand as well as federal requirements under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

At a time when our budget is shrinking and demands for paratransit service grow, this task force will study current expected funding and service gaps. This is critical to allow for

long-term budget stability for our counties. With my bill, we can come together to find solutions. I urge a favorable report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Karen Lewis Young". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Senator Karen Lewis Young