

## **SB331 - Task Force to Study Paratransit in Maryland**

Finance Committee

February 7, 2024

Ethan Simon

Written Testimony in Support of SB331

Good afternoon, Chair Beidle and the distinguished members of the Finance Committee. I am Ethan Simon, a student at the University of Maryland and legislative intern here at the Maryland General Assembly for Senator Lewis Young. It is my pleasure to come before you and offer testimony in support of SB 331, the Task Force to Study Paratransit in Maryland.

Paratransit plays a vital role in aiding seniors and those with disabilities in their daily lives. Last summer, I interned at a nonprofit organization, Jewish Family Children's Service, which focused on empowering people with disabilities across the greater Philadelphia area. Many of our clients, unable to drive themselves, relied on paratransit provided by the organization to attend our diverse range of programs, including activities centered around baking, kitchen skills, education, and socialization. Without this service, they would miss out on essential social interactions and the opportunity to develop crucial life skills.

Furthermore, many individuals depended on local paratransit for tasks like grocery shopping. However, using this service for shopping posed significant challenges. It was unreliable, frequently arriving late and failing to accommodate riders' requested destinations. To mitigate these issues, riders scheduled trips well in advance, which often resulted in lengthy wait times. Consequently, they would lose entire days due to the unpredictability of this mode of transportation, a stark contrast to other public transit options available in the city.

I share this personal experience to underscore the profound importance of reliable paratransit. This can determine whether someone attends a critical medical appointment or obtains a necessary prescription. Conversely, unreliable service can strand riders in unsafe conditions for hours, lead to frustration, distrust in the transportation system, and potential job loss. Maryland is not immune to these challenges. A recent report from the U.S. Attorney's office regarding MobilityLink highlighted consistent delays in pick-up times, causing difficulties in daily planning and getting to work on time.

This bill aims to address any challenges Maryland riders may face with paratransit services. By examining funding and service gaps, the state can gain a better understanding of the requirements for a wholly effective paratransit system. Thank you for allowing me to testify on this bill and I urge a favorable report.

Sincerely,  
Ethan Simon