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SB1060

March 14, 2024

TO: Members of the Senate Finance Committee
FROM: Nina Themelis, Director of Mayor's Office of Government Relations
RE: Senate Bill 1060 - Railroads - Safety Requirements (Maryland Railway Safety Act of 2024)
POSITION: SUPPORT

Chair Beidle, Vice Chair Klausmeier, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **supports** Senate Bill (SB) 1060.

SB 1060 would create standards for the operation of trains in the State, with an emphasis on oversized and understaffed freight trains. The maximum length of a train would be capped at 8,500 feet and require a minimum of two crew members per train. SB 1060 also establishes a database to track the transport of hazardous material by freight in the state of Maryland. In 2022 and 2023, Maryland saw a year-over-year increase in train accidents and derailments, exceeding pre-pandemic levels (U.S. DOT Federal Railroad Administration). The impact of train derailments and blocked intersections will only continue to grow as railroads continue to reduce overhead by running fewer trains, increasing freight length to compensate, and cutting back on personnel.

In addition to the risk of physical injury is the exposure of Baltimore residents to hazardous materials in the event of a derailment/accident. In February 2023, a train carrying toxic vinyl chloride in East Palestine, Ohio, derailed because of cost-cutting measures by rail company Norfolk Sothern. The dangerous chemicals leaked out and were subsequently burned off, causing contamination of the air and waterways in the area. Hazardous materials such as vinyl chloride are often transported via train and are highly volatile, carcinogenic, and difficult to decontaminate. While this derailment occurred in another nearby state, the derailment directly impacted Baltimore City due to the intent of neighboring officials to displace the toxic waste to Baltimore for processing. Ensuring railroad safety isn't just for the areas immediately surrounding rail lines, but has a regional and national impact. Regulation here in Maryland can improve the rail practices across the region.

SB 1060 bill would protect the City of Baltimore by setting parameters regarding what cost-cutting measures are impermissible due to safety risks for Baltimore citizens and railroad workers. Explicitly regulating railroads and the transport of hazardous materials throughout the state will mitigate the possibility of injury due to accidents and public health disasters, like the East Palestine derailment, occurring in a much more densely populated area such as Baltimore.

For these reasons, the BCA respectfully requests a **favorable** report on SB 1060.