

SB331 TASK FORCE TO STUDY PARATRANSIT IN MARYLAND

**TESTIMONY OF
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BOARD MEMBER
SERVICE COORDINATION, INC.**

**SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE
Senator Pamela Beidle, Chair
Senator Katherine Klausmeier, Vice Chair
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Greetings Chair and distinguished members of the committee. My name is Marlene Hendler. I am a member of the Board of Directors of Service Coordination, Inc. (SCI).

SCI is a leading non-profit organization providing award-winning case management services and advocacy for more than 15,000 individuals with disabilities, medically complex needs, older adults, and others across Maryland, the District of Columbia, and Northern Virginia. SCI's mission is to help people understand their choices and create pathways to community resources that respect their dignity and rights. The organization also provides companion care and aging life care management through Montcordia.

I am happy to be here to testify in support of SB 331 which establishes a task force to study paratransit in Maryland. I have long been an advocate for paratransit. As a result, many people with disabilities are limited in how they can get around. This increases isolation and reduces independence.

There are many gaps in paratransit services, and I can talk all day about those gaps. Many of us have experienced barriers in paratransit and we need a full study of those gaps so we can address those gaps and improve access.

There are people all over the state, especially on the eastern shore or in Western Maryland, who do not have access to paratransit. If they needed to come to Baltimore or Annapolis, it would cost them hundreds of dollars using private services. This is not acceptable.

Our biggest concern is that the bill does not require that a user of paratransit services be on the task force. There should be no decisions that affect us without involving us. I urge you to add persons with disabilities who use paratransit on the taskforce. This will strengthen the bill and improve the outcomes of the task force.

Please support SB331 with an amendment adding users of paratransit services to the task force.

Thank you.