



SB 891: MobilityLink Paratransit Service Improvements Study
Senate Finance Committee
March 13, 2024

Testimony of Floyd Hartley, Chair of Consumers for Accessible Ride Services
Position: Support

My name is Floyd Hartley. I am a 71-year-old wheelchair user. I have relied on Mobility for the last 20 years. I am the chair of Consumers for Accessible Ride Services (CARS), an advocacy group for paratransit riders. I have been involved with CARS for about 18 years.

I wish I could have been with you in person to support SB 891, but it is too challenging for me to travel to Annapolis by paratransit. I could have ended up missing the whole hearing or getting stuck in Annapolis for many hours.

CARS supports the MobilityLink Study because paratransit is essential to the well-being of Marylanders with disabilities. Mobility riders need safe and reliable paratransit to access our communities. SB 891 creates an independent study of Mobility and its workforce, to identify ways we can make real, lasting improvements to Mobility.

I have seen the inadequacies of Mobility firsthand. Mobility riders have to deal with late pick-ups, excessively long rides, vehicles showing up at the wrong location or not at all, or equipment failures. Sometimes the heating or air conditioning in the vehicle does not work, and we have to travel in uncomfortable, or even dangerous conditions.

Mobility's service fluctuates. Sometimes, we see improvements after lawsuits. But then we see the same issues come back again, and again.

Mobility riders are often treated as second-class citizens. Sometimes doing one errand can take the whole day. We have to account for the thirty-minute window before and after our pick-up time for our ride to arrive, as well as a buffer in case our ride arrives late, and for a long transit time aboard Mobility.

We are often in fear that Mobility will not arrive and we will be stuck. This is especially true for people who use power wheelchairs. If a non-disabled person



misses their bus, they can call a taxi, or ask a friend for a ride. People who use power wheelchairs can't do that. If Mobility doesn't come after an appointment, we are stuck, with no safe way home.

We deserve better. We deserve safety and reliability in our public transit. We deserve to have Mobility studied by an objective and skilled team of researchers. This is necessary to make improvements to Mobility, so people with disabilities who use paratransit never feel like second-class citizens again.

For these reasons, CARS strongly supports SB 891 and urges a favorable report.

Respectfully,

Floyd Hartley