
January 31, 2024

The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr.
Chair, Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East, Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis MD 21401

Re: *Letter of Information – Senate Bill 153 – Maryland Department of Transportation – Child Exploitation and Human Trafficking Awareness, Training, and Response*

Dear Chair Smith and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) offers the following letter of information for the Committee’s consideration on Senate Bill 153.

Senate Bill 153 would require MDOT to develop and implement a training program on the identification and reporting of suspected child exploitation and human trafficking victims. This training would be required for MDOT employees and persons employed under State contracts who work at transit stations, airports, port facilities, and highway rest stops, or provide transit services. The training would also be required for taxicab drivers and transportation network operators (TNOs). Senate Bill 153 would further require MDOT to develop signage with information and resources for child exploitation and human trafficking victims to be displayed at certain locations and requires frequent public service announcements with safety information pertaining to the subject matter.

MDOT recognizes the importance of human trafficking awareness and has implemented trainings for both MDOT employees and other transportation-sector workers. For example, at BWI Thurgood Marshall Airport, many MDOT and private employees require a MDOT-issued credential which is contingent upon completion of a video-based human trafficking training. Other training opportunities on these topics are periodically offered at other MDOT modes and by various service providers contracting with the State.

Existing MDOT employee training programs within The Secretary’s Office and each MDOT mode could be leveraged to develop and deliver mandatory, Department-wide training focused on child exploitation and human trafficking. However, the specific training video requirements enumerated in Senate Bill 153 are likely beyond MDOT’s current capabilities and would thus increase the associated time and costs of compliance. MDOT would also need to consider relevant training programs and materials available through federal agencies—including the Department of Transportation (USDOT), the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and the Department of Justice (DOJ)—to ensure consistency with existing programs and established best practices.

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The application of the requirements in Senate Bill 153 with respect to personnel outside the Department, may pose some challenges. Contractors doing business with the State in the environments specified, including small businesses, will be required to ensure their employees receive mandated training. Personnel costs relating to such training are unknown at this time but would be borne by those businesses, which may in turn adjust their pricing to cover those additional costs. It should also be noted that MDOT does not regulate either taxi companies or transportation network companies (TNCs) such as Uber and Lyft, which would complicate the implementation of Senate Bill 153. As such, both the delivery and tracking of training for these groups by MDOT may be challenging.

The cost to implement the requirements for posted signage, development of trainings and associated materials, public service announcements, as well as the potential liability for failing to report human trafficking could be significant.

The Maryland Department of Transportation respectfully requests the Committee consider this information during its deliberations of Senate Bill 153.

Respectfully submitted,

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Maryland Department of Transportation
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