



MARYLAND STATE & D.C. AFL-CIO

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HB 1144 - State Public Transit Service Stations - Exclusion for Assault and Bodily Injury House Environment and Transportation Committee February 20, 2025

SUPPORT

**Donna S. Edwards
President**

Maryland State and DC AFL-CIO

Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB 1144. My name is Donna S. Edwards, and I am the President of the Maryland State and District of Columbia AFL-CIO. On behalf of Maryland's 300,000 union members, I offer the following comments.

Assault on our public employees is an assault on all of us. Transit workers, by the nature of their job, interact with the public on a daily basis, and are, oftentimes, the subject of assault. For our transit system to operate effectively and efficiently, it must be a safe and secure environment for our operators.

HB 1144 aligns Maryland with six other states and Montgomery County, in taking a significant step in protecting our transit operators by imposing penalties for individuals who have committed an assault or other intentional act causing bodily injury. As written, a first offense results in a minimum 30-day suspension, a second offense results in a 180-day suspension, and a third offense, or any incident involving a weapon, results in a lifetime ban.

In FY2023, the Maryland Transit Association (MTA), the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA), and the Locally Operated Transit Systems (LOTS), reported a total of 156 transit operator assaults across the state. Of those, 119 (nearly 77%) were "simple assaults," not involving a weapon, while 31 were considered aggravated assaults.¹ These numbers highlight the ongoing risks transit workers face simply for doing their jobs, further emphasizing the need for legislative intervention.

¹ "Assaults on Public Transit Operators (Transportation Article §7-714)." Department of Legislative Services. December 2023.

Our dedicated transit workers uphold the system that many Marylanders rely on, ensuring that operations run smoothly. They are the face of our transportation system and deserve the respect and protections they are owed.

For these reasons, we urge a favorable vote on HB 1144.