VOLVO

TO: The Honorable Marc Korman, Chair
Members, House Environment & Transportation Committee
Delegate Natalie Ziegler

FROM: Richard A. Tabuteau

DATE: February 27, 2025

RE: **FAVORABLE** – House Bill 1256 – *Vehicle Laws - Fully Autonomous Vehicles*

In Maryland, Volvo Group North America's Hagerstown Powertrain Production facility employs nearly 2,000 people including over 1,400 members of the UAW Locals 171 and 1247 and is the last major automotive manufacturer in the state. The plant develops, manufactures, and tests heavy-duty powertrains, transmissions and axles for its Mack and Volvo trucks as well as Prevost and Volvo buses at its 280-acre campus. Volvo Group also employs more than 60 people at one of its U.S. parts distribution facilities in Elkridge.

Volvo is leading in the commercial autonomous vehicle space by developing the Volvo VNL Autonomous. The Volvo VNL Autonomous is a truck built for autonomy on Volvo's autonomous technology platform and features six critical redundant systems—dual braking, steering, communication, computing, power, energy storage, and motion control—enabling safe operations. This autonomous transport solution includes a virtual driver, required infrastructure, operations and uptime support as well as a cloud solution that controls the transport system and manages logistics flows. Volvo Autonomous Solutions ("V.A.S.") is currently testing autonomous vehicles in Texas on a lane from Dallas to Houston.

A decade ago, in 2015, the Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA) established the Connected and Automated Vehicles Workgroup to promote autonomous vehicle innovation by developing a strategic framework that prioritizes safety. Current testing in Maryland takes place at designated sites owned by the Maryland Department of Transportation and its partners. House Bill 1256 authorizes a person to operate a fully autonomous vehicle on Maryland highways. Before operating a fully autonomous vehicle, a person must submit a law enforcement interaction plan to the administration and proof of security to the MVA. This legislation offers a legal path to operating autonomously in Maryland, provides the State with visibility into companies seeking to operate autonomously in the State, and an opportunity to engage the industry to establish the right guardrails to foster innovation without compromising safety.

Though the vehicles may be autonomous, humans will continue to fill key operational roles in the autonomous vehicle ecosystem. Humans will inspect autonomous vehicles for maintenance, safety, and compliance with the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, Federal Motor

Vehicle Safety Standards, Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance Enhanced Pre-Trip Inspection criteria, and the Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration requirements. Developers and operators would also work with law enforcement to familiarize them with autonomous vehicle operation, including Minimal Risk Maneuvers (MRM). In addition, humans will support autonomous vehicles as remote assistants monitoring system functions and providing logistical support (*e.g.* planners, launchers, monitors, etc.) similar to motor carrier dispatchers and will also play key roles at autonomous vehicle terminals for middle-mile transportation. Crucially for stabilizing the overall trucking workforce, dispatchers are not required to obtain and maintain a commercial driver's license.

With the passage of House Bill 1256, Volvo and other companies with a presence in Maryland will be well positioned to win the future of autonomous vehicle technology. Volvo urges the House Environment & Transportation Committee to give House Bill 1256 a favorable report.

For more information call:
Richard A. Tabuteau
347.886.2904