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HB 517 – The MARC Rail Authority Act

To the Honorable Mark Korman, Chair; Regina Boyce, Vice Chair and Members of the House Environment and Transportation Committee

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Hello, my name is David Pendleton, I am the Director of the Maryland Safety and Legislative Board for the Transportation Division of SMART. We are the train union. Our members in the State of Maryland are employees of CSX Transportation, Norfolk Southern, Canton Railroad, Amtrak and MARC. We are conductors, engineers, yardmasters, switchmen and utility workers.

I am here today urging a favorable report for **HB517, The MARC Rail Authority Act**.

HB517 would create the MARC Rail Authority, allowing MARC to become its own independent agency operating on behalf of MDOT. Allowing MARC, the authority to operate independently of the MTA will allow it to be more efficient, growth oriented and attentive to the needs of the riding public.

Our neighbor rail commuter agency, the VRE, has had similar authority for decades, while also having similar operations to MARC. According to the [CEO's report](#), in 2024, VRE's operating expenses were 1.8 million dollars under budget. This was due to its leadership being able to make decisions without unnecessary bureaucracy.

Despite ridership being only 30% of pre-pandemic levels, these efficiencies were achieved without having to lay off employees or making cuts to its service. In fact, VRE has managed to expand. Starting construction on many capital improvements at several of its stations and facilities. To date totaling \$125,000,000.00 worth of capital improvements. Many more are in the development and final planning stages totaling hundreds of millions of dollars more. Creating thousands of good paying union construction jobs. Imagine what MARC can do if it were free to operate in the same manner. Imagine the positive reforms that could be made to the MTA when this model proves to be successful.

A better service, more attentive to its customers' needs, while creating and maintaining thousands of good union jobs, a win-win formula for success!

Thank you for your time and consideration of our positions. SMART urges a favorable report!

Sincerely,
David Sr

David Pendleton Sr., Chairperson/Director
Maryland Safety & Legislative Board, LO-023
 Transportation Division