



Testimony in Support of House Bill 1256: Vehicle Laws - Fully Autonomous Vehicles

February 27th, 2025

Chair Korman and distinguished members of the Environment and Transportation Committee, it is my pleasure to come before you and offer testimony in favor of House Bill 1256: Vehicle Laws - Fully Autonomous Vehicles. If enacted, this bill would authorize the use of autonomous vehicles on Maryland's roads. My name is Matthew Walsh and I serve as State Policy Manager at Waymo where I lead our government affairs work throughout the East Coast.

Waymo is a fully autonomous driving technology company with a mission to be the world's most trusted driver. Today, we operate a fully autonomous ride-hailing service in Phoenix, San Francisco, and Los Angeles. We will also add two new cities this year, when we launch in Austin and Atlanta through our expanded partnership with Uber.

With our service, customers hail a ride through an app on their phone, and a vehicle without a human behind the wheel picks them up curbside and safely drives them to their destination. Today, Waymo provides more than 150,000 paid passenger trips in these cities each week. The Waymo Driver, our automated driving system, drives over one million miles on a weekly basis. To put that in perspective, it would take an average American driver 75 years to drive the mileage that the Waymo Driver travels each week.

This amazing progress didn't happen overnight. Over the past 15 years, Waymo has worked tirelessly to develop and build the Waymo Driver to be the world's most experienced driver. We are incredibly proud of the safety record we have achieved. While I encourage the committee to review all of our safety data which we make available online at [Waymo.com/safety](https://waymo.com/safety), I do want to highlight a few key numbers.

Over 33 million miles of passenger operations, the data show the Waymo driver reducing the frequency and severity of collisions where we operate. Specifically, the Waymo Driver has reduced air-bag deployment crashes by 81% and lowered injury-causing crashes by 78% compared to humans driving the same distance. That percentage translates to 98 fewer injury-causing crashes compared to what the average human driver would experience in the same driving conditions, over the same number of miles. These statistics are encouraging and remind us of the important contributions self-driving technology can make to road safety. Nearly 43,000 traffic-related deaths happen on U.S. roads every year, and as of last week, 50 people have already died in traffic collisions in Maryland this year.



In the cities where Waymo operates, we've prioritized building a robust, useful service for residents and visitors alike. We are not operating in small corners of the country — we are connecting people to where they want to go in multiple major metros, and helping them access other parts of the existing transportation network to get them to their destination, including connecting to public transit. Tens of thousands of people across the country are using Waymo to go to the grocery store, to dinner, to doctor appointments, and even to the airport. In Arizona, we have partnered with Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport, where Waymo currently provides curbside pickup just like any other ride share service, 24 hours a day.

Waymo was excited to bring our technology to the D.C. area last year for testing purposes. The Waymo Driver spent nearly four months driving throughout parts of the district including Downtown, NoMa, Capitol Hill, and the Southwest Waterfront with a human specialist behind the wheel. We are eager to expand that work into Maryland and work towards giving residents across the region a new, safe, and reliable means of transportation.

I also want to tell you about how Waymo operates.

Before beginning our testing in a new city, Waymo works closely with state departments of transportation, highway patrol, and local leaders, as well as their city and regional counterparts. After a period of testing, we start with initial service territories for select riders. The first group is often Waymo employees, followed by a slow-and-steady introduction of members of the public. As we expand in any city, we thoughtfully scale our operations in coordination with our local partners.

Our mission is to be the world's most trusted driver and we take public safety very seriously. We have a team of former first responders and safety officials who work with emergency personnel of all kinds to train and inform them on the technology prior to and during ongoing operations. In fact, we have trained more than 15,000 first responders across the country. Waymo vehicles encounter hundreds of emergency vehicles on the roads where we operate every day, and can safely respond to their instructions.

Today, twenty-five states have enacted bills similar to HB 1256, which is necessary before companies like Waymo can operate in any state. I hope that my testimony as well as testimony you will hear from others will shed light on the critical safety and accessibility benefits that AVs are providing today.



On behalf of Waymo, I would like to thank Delegate Ziegler for her interest in this topic, and the innovative team at the Motor Vehicle Administration for their years of thoughtful leadership in this area.

As I mentioned earlier, Waymo already drives our customers more than one million miles each week in fully autonomous vehicles. We look forward to the opportunity to safely share our service in Maryland and be a part of your solution to reduce traffic-related deaths in the State.

I urge a favorable report on House Bill 1256.

Thank you