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The Honorable Marc Korman  
Chair, House Environment and Transportation Committee  
250 Taylor House Office Building  
Annapolis MD 21401

***Re: Favorable- House Bill 1256 – Vehicle Laws – Fully Autonomous Vehicles***

Dear Chair Korman and Committee Members,

Howard County-based STEER Tech offers the following information for the Committee's consideration regarding House Bill 1256.

As the automated vehicle (AV) industry continues to evolve, it is essential that Maryland maintain a forward-thinking approach to technology and innovation. The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) has been proactive in its efforts to facilitate the safe testing and deployment of autonomous vehicle technologies in the state. The MDOT is committed to ensuring that Maryland benefits from the many advantages AVs have to offer, including improved safety, accessibility, and mobility. By working collaboratively with industry stakeholders, the MDOT has developed a comprehensive framework for testing autonomous vehicles, which has been a key factor in ensuring safety while enabling progress.

House Bill 1256 is in line with Maryland's longstanding efforts to support critical advancements in AV technology and build public trust in technology.

STEER Tech is encouraged by the intent of this legislation to establish comprehensive regulations for fully autonomous vehicles. By defining key terms and outlining operational requirements, this bill builds on previous actions of the State, without hindering research and development, and deployment efforts of longstanding, Maryland-based companies in this space. Additionally, this bill sets reasonable standards for fully autonomous vehicles without burdening owners, operators, and other AV stakeholders with redundant reporting requirements. Further, by clearly defining guardrails between the state, its agencies, and local jurisdictions, AV companies operating in Maryland can be certain that the state is taking the necessary steps to integrate fully autonomous vehicles into Maryland's transportation system.

At present, 24 states have passed laws allowing the deployment of AVs without a human operator, while 12 additional states allow for testing. HB 1256 places Maryland lockstep with other states, including our neighbors D.C., Pennsylvania and West Virginia, as they move forward with testing, trust building and the ultimate deployment of AV.

In summary, HB 1256 re-establishes Maryland's position as a leader in the transportation sector and bolsters the state's carefully structured approach to the testing and deployment of AV technology that has been the result of longstanding partnerships with industry and MDOT. Therefore, STEER Tech respectfully requests that the Committee give a favorable report for House Bill 1256 due to the positive impact this bill could have on the future of autonomous vehicle development in Maryland.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

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