



TECHNET
THE VOICE OF THE
INNOVATION ECONOMY

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February 4, 2025

The Honorable Marc Korman
Chair
House Environment and Transportation Committee
Maryland House of Delegates
21 Taylor House Office Building
6 Bladen Street, Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: HB 439 (Stewart) - Vehicle Laws – Fully Autonomous Vehicles – Human Safety Operators and Reporting Requirements – Unfavorable

Dear Chair Korman and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of TechNet, I'm writing to provide remarks on HB 439 relating to human safety operators and reporting requirements for fully autonomous vehicles.

TechNet is the national, bipartisan network of technology CEOs and senior executives that promotes the growth of the innovation economy by advocating a targeted policy agenda at the federal and 50-state level. TechNet's diverse membership includes dynamic American businesses ranging from startups to the most iconic companies on the planet and represents over 4.5 million employees and countless customers in the fields of information technology, artificial intelligence, e-commerce, the sharing and gig economies, advanced energy, transportation, cybersecurity, venture capital, and finance. TechNet has offices in Austin, Boston, Chicago, Denver, Harrisburg, Olympia, Sacramento, Silicon Valley, Tallahassee, and Washington, D.C.

The development and deployment of autonomous vehicles (AVs) offers the potential to increase equity by providing mobility-as-a-service and enables tremendous societal benefits by improving roadway safety through the reduction in frequency and severity of automobile crashes. AVs also increase access to transportation for all people, including people with disabilities, older adults, and others who cannot currently drive themselves. Further, AVs can significantly enhance the safety and efficiency of goods movement, create jobs, and help better meet consumer demand while promoting innovation and growth across various sectors of the economy. AVs may likewise mitigate other inefficiencies of current motor vehicle use, such as congestion.

TechNet and its member companies are eager to work with the committee and sponsor on authorizing AV legislation in a way that allows the safe deployment of autonomous vehicles in Maryland. However, we are concerned about HB 439 as

drafted as we believe it will negatively impact consumers, businesses, and future investments.

The driver-in requirement for vehicles with a gross weight over 10,001 pounds will stifle innovation and other benefits of this technology. This requirement would make Maryland an outlier among the many other states that have enacted autonomous vehicle legislation, and we believe that there is no reason for a driver-in precedent to be set now. The requirements outlined in HB 439 will hold back testing and ultimate deployment of autonomous vehicles, as well as serve as a disincentive for future investments in Maryland. Other states have shown it is possible to foster the safe development of this type of technology without such restrictions.

Again, TechNet stands ready to work with the sponsor on language that will balance consumer safety with business innovation. TechNet urges you and your colleagues to consider policies that will unlock the tremendous potential of autonomous vehicles. If you have any questions regarding TechNet's opposition to HB 439 in its current form, please don't hesitate to reach out. We look forward to continuing these conversations with you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Margaret Durkin". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of each word being capitalized and prominent.

Margaret Durkin
TechNet Executive Director, Pennsylvania & the Mid-Atlantic