



## THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

### Testimony in Support of HB 1256: Vehicle Laws - Fully Autonomous Vehicles

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 and regulate the use of autonomous vehicles on Maryland's roads.

Fully autonomous vehicles are operated without a human driver.

This bill authorizes the Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration and the Maryland Insurance Administration to establish the standards and requirements necessary for autonomous vehicles to operate safely and legally in Maryland.

There are also provisions to include our first responders and public safety officers, to ensure they are partners here, and also that training, protocols and interactions with autonomous vehicles are well understood and are uniform statewide.

Amendments are forthcoming, developed alongside the Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration and Maryland Insurance Administration to ensure they are able to effectively regulate what for Maryland will be a new industry, including the ability to pull a vehicle off the roads if it is found to be unsafe.

While autonomous vehicles will be new to Maryland, they are not new. 25 states have already passed substantially similar legislation from California, to Florida, Arizona and Tennessee and many others.

In states where they currently operate, data show that autonomous vehicles are significantly safer than a human driver. Waymo, an autonomous ride hailing company, operates in six markets and provides rides for more than 150,000 customers a week, covering more than a million miles. Their data show: 81% fewer crashes involving airbags, 78% fewer injury-causing crashes and 62% fewer police reported crashes compared to a human driver. According to Zero Deaths Maryland, over a third of crashes on our roads are due to speed and aggressive driving. Autonomous vehicles do not speed, drive while impaired, or text and drive.

While we do not yet have them in Maryland, autonomous vehicles are not experimental technology. On the contrary, they are a normal part of everyday life for hundreds of thousands of Americans. They offer an incredible opportunity for freedom and convenience for anyone who is unable to drive, such as the blind and disabled and the elderly. They don't discriminate when picking up passengers, and they offer a choice for those who may be nervous about a human driver.

Autonomous vehicles will come to our roads having gone through rigorous testing, mapping and small-scaled deployment that grows responsibly and responsively to local communities.

This bill is a foundational piece in the puzzle of expanding transportation options for all Marylanders.

I urge a favorable report on **House Bill 1256**. Thank you.