

Chair Korman, Vice Chair Boyce and members of the committee. My name is Bob Carlson. I am a Maryland resident and for many years I worked for the Community Transportation Association of America, advocating for the rights of all people – especially those with disabilities – to safe and accessible public transit. I myself use a wheelchair and often ride public transit.

Last year I proudly testified in the Senate in favor of Delegate Lewis' excellent Better Bus Act. I was shocked however, when this committee removed protections for disabled and senior transit riders from the bill. I didn't understand why then – and still don't understand why – this committee removed bus stop zone enforcement from that bill.

I have witnessed on many occasions when the bus operator would apologize to non-ambulatory passengers on the curb that he could not get close enough to allow them to board because illegally parked cars prevented it. Those disabled people had to either make their way to another bus stop or simply hope the offending vehicle would soon be moved.

Last year the legislature had the opportunity to significantly improve disabled people's access to transportation by enabling transit buses to use cameras to enforce illegal parking in bus stop zones. But this committee removed this protection, limiting enforcement to only bus lane violations.

We know that automated bus stop enforcement works and is in place around the country. In fact, every city that uses automated bus cameras to protect bus lanes also protects bus stop zones.

The District of Columbia, New York City, Oakland, Los Angeles, Philadelphia and Sacramento have programs protecting both bus lanes and bus stop zones from illegal parking.

As a Marylander, it is embarrassing to say that we have been left out.

People with disabilities, seniors and other vulnerable communities need automated bus stop enforcement now. I support HB 206 because it fixes the legislature's failure last year to give transit agencies the ability to reduce illegal parking obstructing bus stops — illegal parking that prevents people like me from accessing public transit.

Transportation is a right, and it is denied to people with disabilities every time the bus stop is blocked by illegal parking. This legislation will help ensure that no rider is left behind because the bus stop is illegally blocked.

Thank you for your time.