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Good Afternoon Chair Korman and Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee,

My name is O'Marie Barnes, and I am honored to write to you, urging a favorable report on HB1539, a bill that would allow greater access to State IDs for disadvantaged youth.

I am seventeen years old, and I can confidently express that this bill would mean so much to so many young Marylanders experiencing nontraditional households, strenuous familial relationships, and situations outside of their control. For me, the feeling of being turned away from the Motor Vehicle Administration, regardless of possessing my birth certificate and proof of residency, was heartbreaking. I couldn't understand why my situation was not accounted for, or why my Great-Grandmother, who has been a caregiver for me since months after my birth, could not help.

With a State ID, I will finally be able to get a Driver's license, drive myself to work or school, and take an international trip. No longer will I be forced to watch as other high-schoolers pass through driving school, buy their first vehicles, and live out their lives with a new sense of Independence—one that's unavailable to me.

No young-adult should be put in the uncomfortable position of having to answer the question, "when are you getting your license?", while stammering to figure out an appropriate response. No young-adult should be confronted with the catch-22 of either legal emancipation and lost health insurance, or sitting in wait for years.

This bill is an opportunity to make so many young people's lives better, to lift their hopes, and to provide upward mobility for the thousands of people under the age of eighteen who, like me, just want to be given a chance. This is why I write to urge a favorable report for HB1539, because we can all agree that when we break down barriers for our young people, we not only support Maryland, but we show our youth that they matter.

Thank you for your time and effort. I urge you to support HB1539.

Sincerely,

O'Marie Barnes