



Statement of the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 689

SB 26– Davis Martinez Public Employee Safety and Health Act
January 27th, 2025

TO: The Honorable Pamela Beidle and Members of the Senate Finance Committee
FROM: Matthew Girardi, Political & Communications Director, ATU Local 689

ATU Local 689 strongly supports SB 26 and urges the Senate Finance Committee to issue a favorable report. This bill is a necessary measure for ensuring the safety of transit workers throughout the state of Maryland.

At Local 689, we represent over 15,000 transit workers and retirees throughout the Washington DC Metro Area performing many skilled transportation crafts for the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA), MetroAccess, MTA Commuter Bus, and DC Streetcar among others. Our union helped turn low-wage, exploitative transit jobs into transit careers. We became an engine for the middle-class of this region.

Being transit workers, most of the time, our members do not control who decides to get into their vehicle. Additionally, members work around the clock, meaning that they see individuals of all different abilities, states, moods, and behaviors. Unfortunately, that means that too often, members have been on the frontlines of violent attacks from disturbed riders. In fact, documented attacks on transit workers increased by 121% between 2008 and 2021 per the FTA. However, if a more accurate reporting was made, the Union expects that it would be even higher.

The Federal Transit Administration requires that every major transit systems report safety data to the National Transit Database (NTD). Incidents are broken down into major (i.e. someone required transportation to a hospital) and non-major. Non-major incidents are aggregated and not reported individually. In 2024, the NTD reported the following data for WMATA, MTA, RideOn, & The Bus: 33 assaults on operators (major events - requiring transport to hospital), 62 other major events (e.g. assault on non-operator, assaults on passengers), 191 non-major physical assaults on operators & 204 non-major assaults on other transit workers.

SB 26 requires Maryland OSHA to create or improve programs to actually address workplace violence. It requires real inspections of fieldwork locations, which seems to include vehicles and vehicle routes that our members work on. It even creates a Public Employees' Safety and Health Unit at MDOL. We need action now.

We thank Senator Kramer for leading this necessary measure and plead this committee to issue a favorable report.