

Chair Beidle and Members of the Finance Committee,

My name is Jesse Alvin Jeweler, and I want to tell you what happens when my wheelchair—my lifeline—breaks.

A while back, the controller board in my scooter failed. It was frustrating, but I thought, “Okay, things break. I’ll get it fixed.” That turned out to be wishful thinking. The company that made my scooter, Drive Medical, had stopped producing it. Because of that, there were no replacement parts. Worse, because the repair information is proprietary, no independent repair shop would touch it. I was stuck. My only real option was to shell out a fortune to the manufacturer—if they were even willing to fix it at all.

As a former owner of a Radio Shack, and audio engineer for WHFS radio, I spent years troubleshooting and maintaining complex equipment—often having to repair and modify systems myself to keep the radio station running. I know firsthand that with the right tools, documentation, and parts, many repairs are completely manageable. The problem isn’t that mobility devices are too complex to fix—it’s that manufacturers deliberately withhold the necessary resources, locking out skilled professionals and knowledgeable users alike. This isn’t just an inconvenience; it’s an artificial barrier that leaves people stranded.

It’s worse with Medicare-approved wheelchairs. There are two types: one you technically “rent” from the government for five years before it becomes yours, and another that Medicare pays for upfront. If you have the rental, getting repairs is nearly impossible. Medicare won’t cover it, and in most cases, repair shops won’t help. Even if you go straight to the manufacturer, you’re looking at an 8-to-10-week wait because they only allow a handful of technicians to be trained and certified. Meanwhile, you’re stuck without your wheelchair, unable to get around, unable to live your life.

This bill would change that. It would require manufacturers to provide the parts, tools, and software necessary for independent repair shops—or even the users themselves—to fix their own mobility devices. It would mean that people like me wouldn’t have to wait months or pay an arm and a leg just to keep moving.

This isn’t a hypothetical issue. It’s real, and it’s personal. I urge you to pass SB 382 and give Marylanders like me the right to repair what keeps us going.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Jesse Alvin Jeweler
Annapolis Resident