

---

February 28, 2025

The Honorable Pamela Beidle  
Chair, Senate Finance Committee  
3 East Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis MD 21401

***Re: Letter of Opposition – Senate Bill 973 – Aviation Oversight - BWI Thurgood Marshall  
Airport Master Plan***

Dear Chair Beidle and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) respectfully opposes Senate Bill 973 which proposes significant changes to the roles and responsibilities of the Maryland Aviation Administration (MAA), the Maryland Aviation Commission (Commission), and the MAA Executive Director.

While MAA supports the intent of SB 973 to enhance oversight and accountability, the bill provisions pose significant concerns regarding efficiency, clarity, and potential disruptions to the operations of Maryland's State-owned airports, particularly the Baltimore-Washington International Thurgood Marshall (BWI Marshall) Airport.

The proposed legislation would transfer specific decision-making authority from the Executive Director to the Commission. MAA highly values collaborative engagement with the Commission; however, it strongly maintains that centralizing decision-making under the Executive Director remains essential for swift, coordinated responses to evolving aviation priorities, federal compliance deadlines, and stakeholder concerns. Fragmenting this authority could introduce bureaucratic inefficiencies and delay time-sensitive actions.

Though the Commission's advisory role provides valuable strategic input, its structure is not designed for hands-on oversight of technical and operational matters—such as contract negotiations, safety investigations, or real-time crisis management. The Executive Director's office possesses the specialized expertise and institutional knowledge required for these day-to-day decisions.

SB 973 would impose new requirements around the Master Plan process at BWI Marshall Airport. MAA is concerned that the proposed language reflects misunderstandings about MAA's existing Master Plan process, the scope of a Master Plan, and the availability of well-developed Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) guidance and industry best practices. MAA is in the process of securing federal funding to initiate a Master Plan update for BWI Marshall, and the existing FAA-guided and nationally accepted process satisfies the intent of the proposed legislation, including provisions around stakeholder engagement.

The Honorable Pamela Beidle  
Page Two

The Maryland Department of Transportation requests the Committee consider this information when deliberating Senate Bill 973 and issue the bill an unfavorable report.

Respectfully submitted,

George R. Robinson  
Legislative Affairs Manager  
Maryland Aviation Administration  
667-967-8097

Matthew Mickler  
Director, Office of Government Affairs  
Maryland Department of Transportation  
410-865-1090