



Empowering People to Lead Systemic Change
The Protection and Advocacy System for the State of Maryland

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Health and Government Operations Committee
HOUSE BILL 1481: Disability Services - Adapted Vehicle Access
Pilot Program Established
March 10, 2025
Position: Support

Disability Rights Maryland (DRM) is the Protection & Advocacy agency for Maryland, mandated to advance the civil rights of people with disabilities. DRM (DRM) submits this testimony in support of House Bill 1481, which creates the Adapted Vehicle Access Pilot Program. DRM submits this testimony in support of HB 1481.

HB 1481 proposes the Adapted Vehicle Access Pilot Program (the "Program") to provide adapted vehicles to wheelchair users in Maryland. The Maryland Department of Disabilities (MDOD) would be tasked with implementing and overseeing the program. Responsibilities include selecting eligible participants, with priority given to those residing in areas with limited public transportation, and soliciting donations of vehicles, modification services, and funds from individuals and corporations. The Program would run for five years, with the option to extend or expand in 2030. Its impact will be assessed and evaluation will look at how access to vehicle modifications impacts independence, mobility, job opportunities, and dependency on public subsidies.

Reliable transportation is essential for quality of life and plays a crucial role in determining whether people can fully participate in their communities. Wheelchair users face significant barriers to transportation, which severely limit access to employment, education, healthcare, shopping, social opportunities, and more. Owning an adapted vehicle can significantly expand these opportunities.

The implementation of HB 1481 could be a transformative move toward enhancing the lives of wheelchair users throughout the state, particularly in areas lacking adequate public transit, such as rural areas. Individuals living in areas with limited public transit would receive priority in this pilot program. Wheelchair users in rural and other underserved transit areas often face isolation, unable to engage in community life due to limited transportation options.

It is time to expand access and ensure that wheelchair users in rural, suburban, and metropolitan areas alike have this vital opportunity. For these reasons, DRM supports House Bill 1481 and requests a favorable report. We thank you for your consideration of this bill.

For more information or questions about our position, please contact me at AudreyS@DisabilityRightsMD.org or 443-692-2507.

Respectfully,
Audrey Sellers (she/her)
Advocate
Disability Rights Maryland