

March 7, 2025

The Honorable Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk  
Chair, Health and Government Operations Committee  
241 Taylor House Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

***Re: Letter of Information – House Bill 1119 – Procurement – Advertising – Local News Organizations***

Dear Chair Pena-Melnyk and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) takes no position on House Bill 1119 and provides the following information for the Committee's consideration.

HB 1119 would require MDOT to structure procurement procedures to achieve an overall goal of 50% of the total dollar value of procurement contracts for print or digital advertising being made directly to local news organizations.

The Motor Vehicle Administration's (MVA) Maryland Highway Safety Office (MHSO) invests over \$2 million in paid media advertisements each federal fiscal year using funding from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) grant program. Through MHSO's media and marketing contractor – which has office space and employees based in Maryland – and the Maryland-based Minority Business Enterprise (MBE) subcontractors, the MHSO carefully researches and selects paid media tactics and platforms to effectively deliver safe driving messages Statewide. These messaging campaigns often include digital platforms that are not restricted by paywalls, ensuring broad accessibility. In addition, the MHSO places local radio, TV, and billboard advertisements; however, a national team handles the media buying activities. These campaigns are an important tool in reaching Vision Zero, the goal of zero deaths on Maryland's roadways by 2030.

In addition to ensuring broad accessibility for its safety campaign messaging, the MHSO tailors its messaging to reach Marylanders across all demographics, geographic areas, and socioeconomic levels. A diverse mix of media platforms is essential to ensuring these critical safety messages reach the entire population. Depending on the region and market size, local news organizations may not have equal access to the state's entire target audience. This could lead to uneven outreach, especially if some areas have more established or better-funded local news organizations than others.

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The proposed legislation could limit the MHSO's efforts by curtailing the effective reach of its messaging efforts, thus reducing the benefit of safety campaign messaging in reaching its target audience.

The Maryland Department of Transportation respectfully requests the Committee consider this information when deliberating House Bill 1119.

Respectfully submitted,

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