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MTA Bus Operator & ATU Local 1300

HB 932 - Maryland Transit Administration - Fifth Bus Division Facility - Construction

Favorable
House Appropriations Committee
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My name is Toshiba Greene and I am a proud MTA Bus Operator out of the Eastern Division. I've worked for the Administration for two years. Prior to switching careers, I have also dedicated nine years working at MTA Mobility as a paratransit driver. I'm passionate about my job and appreciate that I get to assist people daily. When I come back from a different assigned run, I have passengers that remember me and ask where I was. I like that I have a job that deals with people, but it can be stressful, especially when we're on the front lines of social issues far bigger than just one bus.

I don't have a pre-assigned route, sometimes known as being an "Extra Operator," I work to cover other bus operator's routes when they are out sick or a particular line needs additional coverage. This means that everyday I get to see what different bus lines look like across the MTA system. We have major capacity issues, especially in the early mornings when it comes time to get students to school. Crowding is a constant concern on the CityLink lines.

For safety reasons we can't fill up the bus past the yellow line, even when there are people waiting to get on. We just have to follow protocol, hit the service button on the Trapeze system to let BOCC know the bus is full and we have to pass up. Cramming people onto the bus already creates a hostile environment. The riders often get mad at each other or mad at the operators. Sometimes you get yelled at by riders who claim that I'm late to pick them up when I know they may be referring to a bus that was ahead of me that may have skipped them because it was full. They sometimes think we skipped them intentionally, when honestly we just didn't have the proper space to accommodate them. Riders often tell you how if they miss that bus or the bus skips them that they'll be late for work. I've had to drive past a mother with her children and a stroller in the rain on the orange line because my bus was already full. Luckily they were in a bus shelter, but the image sticks with you.

No matter how frustrating it is when you're blamed for things that aren't your fault, you have to put yourself in their shoes. They're not mad at me. They're mad at a system that is failing them. We get blamed for a transit system that is operated by workers trying to do their best. We need more support.

As transit workers, we deal with stressful situations everyday. Traffic. Unruly passengers. Buses in need of maintenance. Mental illness. Safety. Having a fifth bus division for MTA would not fix everything, but it is a key part of making the MTA into the system transit riders and transit workers deserve. More frequent bus service, which is only possible with a fifth division, means fewer days driving by riders who get skipped by full buses. More frequent bus service means fewer people taking out their anger with the transit system on me or my coworkers. More frequent and reliable bus service means a slightly less stressful job, creates positive interactions, and a better work environment.

A fifth bus division means a better MTA. I urge you to issue a favorable report for HB 932.