

**Bill: HB 1242/ SB 786 – Transportation of Persons With Disabilities – Transportation Network Companies – Requirements**

**Position: OPPOSE**

Dear Chair, Vice Chair and Members of the Committee:

I am a Maryland resident and a 77-year-old senior, with significant health concerns, who regularly uses transit services arranged through the Maryland Transit Administration. I am writing to express my strong opposition to HB 1242/ SB 786.

When I schedule a ride, I am placing a great deal of trust in the person who picks me up. As an older adult and as someone undergoing frequent medical procedures (breast, lung and brain cancer), I feel more vulnerable when traveling alone, particularly early in the morning or late at night. One of the primary reasons I am comfortable using these rideshare services is the knowledge that drivers have undergone fingerprint-based State and national criminal history records checks through the Criminal Justice Information System. Knowing that there is a thorough, law-enforcement-level check behind every driver provides me with real peace of mind.

This legislation would remove that protection and replace it with a much weaker, name-based background screening performed by private companies. Those database checks can miss criminal records because of name changes, aliases, or incomplete data, and they are simply not the same as an FBI fingerprint check tied to a person's biological identity. I do not understand why riders, especially seniors and other more vulnerable populations, should be forced to accept a lower standard of safety.

The bill also eliminates the requirement that drivers complete a State-developed course on appropriate accommodation, customer service, sensitivity, and respectful treatment of passengers with disabilities. As an aging and disabled passenger, I value a driver who understands how to communicate respectfully, is patient, and gives me the time and space I may need.

I rely on these services to get to medical appointments and to carry out necessary errands. The current fingerprinting and training requirements are the reason I feel comfortable stepping into a vehicle with a stranger. This bill takes away that comfort and replaces it with uncertainty and the very real possibility of a serious crime.

For the aforementioned reasons, I respectfully urge you to give HB 1242/ SB 786 an unfavorable report.

Thank you for considering the perspective of a senior rider (one I know among many) who will be directly affected by this bill if it passes.

Respectfully,

Dr. Barbara A. Smith