

Chair Korman, Vice Chair Guyton, and Distinguished Members of the Committee,

My name is Brandon Russell, and I am a resident of St. Mary's County, Maryland I am writing in opposition to **HB 668**, and I urge an **unfavorable report** on this bill.

I recognize the dangerous nature of standing in or near a busy roadway to solicit for any purpose. However, I am concerned about the potential implications of limiting free speech this may have.

The Commissioners of St. Mary's County received a legislative update briefing from Deputy County Attorney John Houser at their February 10, 2026 business meeting. Houser addressed first amendment concerns, citing Reynolds v Middleton (2015) where a Henrico County, Virginia, ordinance prohibiting roadside solicitation was challenged for violating first amendment rights of a homeless person. The case determined two key things:

- That any ordinance limiting roadside solicitations must be narrowly focused to "serve a significant governmental interest" while not impeding on a person's free speech.
- Henrico County did not present evidence "demonstrating why other, less restrictive means available to further its asserted interests would not be effective."

The Commissioners of St. Mary's County would need to identify data to justify the list of roads where solicitation is prohibited in order to appropriately limit the impact of an ordinance. Notably, the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office has not provided any recommendations to the Commissioners, nor did the Sheriff request this legislation. No discussion has taken place on other, less restrictive means to address this supposed problem.

If a future St. Mary's County ordinance was challenged in court, St. Mary's County taxpayers would foot the bill. That is not a practical use of taxpayer funding which should, instead, be used to support the community in ways that would lift people out of poverty.

Again, I urge an unfavorable report on HB 668.

Brandon Russell
Leonardtown, MD
brandon4stmarys@gmail.com