

Amalgamated Transit Union Local 689



Raymond N. Jackson
President & Business Agent
Keith M. Bullock
Financial Secretary Treasurer
Barry D. Wilson
Recording Secretary
Romoan C. Bruce
First Vice President
Theus R. Jones
Second Vice President

2701 Whitney Place, Forestville, Maryland 20747-3457
Telephone: 301-568-6899 Facsimile: 301-568-0692
www.atulocal689.org

Statement of the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 689

HB 0018

February 3rd, 2026

TO: The Honorable Marc Korman and Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee

FROM: Matthew Girardi, Political and Communications Director, ATU Local 689

ATU Local 689 supports HB 18 and urges the Environment and Transportation committee to issue a favorable report. This bill is a necessary and fair measure for rideshare workers and riders in the state of Maryland.

At Local 689, we represent over 15,000 transit workers and retirees throughout the Washington DC Metro Area performing many skilled transportation crafts for the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA), MetroAccess, DASH, and MTA Commuter Bus among others. Our union helped turn low-wage, exploitative transit jobs into transit careers. We became an engine for the middle-class of this region.

Throughout the Union's history, we have had to fight tooth and nail to get fairness for our members. Be it a living wage, a secure retirement system, quality health insurance, or stable hours, Local 689 has been on the front lines of the fights to bring a decent quality of life to blue-collar workers throughout the transportation and transit industry. Indeed, when transit workers themselves began organizing, we were not given the same rights we have today. Transit workers were often intentionally isolated and not allowed to talk with each other. There wasn't transparency in pay. Firings were at will and hiring was discriminatory. There wasn't even a minimum wage. We sadly see these practices echoed in the ways that rideshare is being allowed to operate currently.

Today, across the state of Maryland, rideshare is a prevalent part of our transportation networks. However, unlike single personal use vehicles, rail, bus, or traditional for-hire vehicles, gig workers do not have these same protections. These workers come from a variety of backgrounds and many rely on driving to make a living and support themselves and their families. However, the app-based transportation industry has little to no transparency regarding driver compensation and working conditions, leading many passengers to be unaware of how little drivers earn on each trip. HB 18 is a step in the right direction by requiring minimum compensation which accomplishes two things.

First if enacted, HB 18 would increase transparency and accountability to the benefit of the riding public. Passengers would be better informed about the actual cost of their trip and be better equipped to determine if the trip fare is reasonable. Second, HB 18 would start to lift up these marginalized workers and move the industry forward into a more just future. Gig drivers play an important role in Maryland's economy and fair compensation recognizes their contributions.

Consistently, we have seen that these workers are paid wages that are below either Maryland or even federal minimum wage. In fact, one study from UC Berkeley showed that drivers took home an estimated

average of \$7.12/hour after expenses. Likewise, we have also seen Uber, Lyft, and other companies take an even greater share of fares per trip, despite them arguing that the people behind the wheel are solely independent contractors. We cannot allow for a whole group of workers to be marginalized and have little to no protections for minimum wage for their work.

ATU Local 689 would like to thank Delegate Vogel for championing the bill to address this critical issue. We urge this committee to favorably report HB 18.