



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Testimony in Support of House Bill 1295: Vehicle Laws - Fully Autonomous Vehicles**

Chair Korman, Vice Chair Guyton, and distinguished members of the Environment and Transportation Committee, it is my pleasure to come before you and offer testimony in favor of **House Bill 1295: Vehicle Laws - Fully Autonomous Vehicles**. If enacted, this bill would authorize the use of autonomous vehicles on Maryland's roads.

Fully autonomous vehicles are operated without a human driver.

The bill authorizes the Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration and the Maryland Insurance Administration to establish the standards and requirements necessary for autonomous vehicles to legally use the roads and operate safely here in Maryland.

There are also provisions to include our first responders and public safety officers, to ensure they are partners here, but also that training, protocols and interactions with autonomous vehicles are well understood and are uniform statewide.

This language was developed alongside the Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration and the Maryland Insurance Administration to ensure that the bill will allow them to effectively regulate what for Maryland will be a new industry, including the ability to pull them off the roads if they are found to be unsafe.

This is a well-worn path: 25 states have already passed substantially similar legislation from California to Florida, Arizona and Tennessee and many others.

This bill would allow Maryland to join those states in creating the framework necessary to allow for autonomous vehicles on our roads.

In states where they currently operate, data show that autonomous vehicles are significantly safer than those with human drivers. That data is publicly available and will remain so.

As an example, Waymo, whose representatives are here with me today, currently operates in 10 markets. Their fleet, operated as a wholly owned ride-hail service, provides rides for more than 400,000 customers per week, covering more than 4 million miles on public roads weekly, with a total of more than 127 million commercial miles driven in the U.S. Their data show: 92% fewer crashes involving pedestrians, 90% fewer serious injury-causing crashes and 81% fewer crashes with any injury at all compared to a human driver. There has never been a fatality resulting from an interaction with an autonomous passenger vehicle, and Waymo has never been the initiator of

a crash involving one of their vehicles, however under the bill the vehicles can get a speeding ticket and the cars can respond to officers as you or I might, via cameras and microphones, and are required to meet the same insurance standards as any other road user.

An autonomous vehicle doesn't drive drunk, get tired or respond emotionally to other road users conduct; they don't speed or break the law – but do learn from one another – every one of Waymo's cars, for example, has access to the full 33 million miles of public road driving experience that the whole fleet has gathered.

This is not speculative or experimental technology, rather it is a part of everyday life for hundreds of thousands of Americans every month. Whether they be passengers who cannot drive themselves or do not wish to, they can access autonomous vehicles providing them freedom of movement and an additional choice in how to interact with the world.

We are probably a decade away from being able to purchase an autonomous vehicle for personal use, but that day will come, and when it does, the blind and disabled, the elderly and teenagers not yet old enough to drive, will have an extraordinary amount of newfound freedom and independence, while the rest of us can feel significantly safer on our roads.

In the meantime, autonomous taxis offer a safer alternative for women, people of color or anyone who could be subject to the biases of a human driver.

Last but not least, Maryland has attracted and is attempting to attract a range of high-tech businesses, including some focused on off-road autonomous vehicles. This framework will allow those companies to grow and place Maryland in the company of future oriented states where high tech companies can flourish and will ensure that autonomous vehicles will come to our roads having gone through rigorous testing, mapping and small-scaled deployment that grows responsibly and responsively to local communities.

This bill is a foundational piece in the puzzle of expanding transportation options for all Marylanders. I urge a favorable report on **House Bill 1295** Thank you.

Sincerely,



Delegate Natalie Ziegler  
Howard & Montgomery Counties, District 9A