



*Live the life you want.*

From: Ronza Othman, President  
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To: House Environment and Transportation Committee

The members of the National Federation of the Blind of Maryland urge the House of Delegates, Environment and Transportation Committee to give a favorable report to HB0733 - Maryland Transit Administration - Fixed-Route Transit Services – Announcements.

Our blind members have the right to move about their communities independently and with dignity. One of the best means for us to do so is via the bus system. Audio announcements on bus stops are necessary for our ability to travel. The bus announces the upcoming stop as we approach it so that we can disembark. In addition, as we wait at a bus stop, we know the bus has arrived and identify it as the particular bus we want because of the audio bus announcements. When we are riding the bus and the audio announcements don't work or are turned off, we must ask the driver to alert us of our stop, and they forget quite frequently, causing us to miss our stop, and then having to double back on foot in an area in which we are not familiar. We also should not have to draw attention to our blindness by asking the drivers to let us know when we get to the stop we need, which is not something sighted passengers have to do.

Many blind and low vision individuals are not technologically sophisticated, and thus using individual GPS devices or other means to know when the bus stop is coming is not possible. Moreover, sighted individuals just have to look outside the window to know where they are – the least that could be done for blind passengers is to have a working and effective audio bus stop announcement system.

Even now, though our buses are supposed to have stop announcements, our members report them being inconsistent, and often not present. One member reports not having heard a single stop announcement on her daily bus route for at least six months. Bus announcements are sometimes turned off by drivers, who find them annoying. But this is

literally part of their jobs. We need stop announcements to work reliably to enable our independence and allow us to retain our dignity as equal participants in society.

For those reasons, we ask for a favorable report on HB0733. For questions, please contact me at [President@nfbmd.org](mailto:President@nfbmd.org) or at 443-426-4110.

**National Federation of the Blind of Maryland**

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