



## COMMISSION ON AGING

### **TESTIMONY ON HB0058 - POSITION: FAVORABLE**

#### **Transportation – Paratransit Services – Interjurisdictional Routes**

**TO:** Chair Korman, Vice Chair Guyton, and members of the Environment and Transportation Committee

**FROM:** Linda Bergofsky, Co-Chair, Montgomery County Commission on Aging

I am writing on behalf of the Montgomery County Commission on Aging (CoA) regarding **HB0058, Transportation – Paratransit Services – Interjurisdictional Routes**. The CoA was established by Montgomery County in 1974 pursuant to a requirement of the Federal Older Americans Act of 1965, that there be an Advisory Council to the Area Agency on Aging. In that role, the CoA serves as an advocate for the health, safety, and well-being of the County's older residents at the local, State, and National levels. This legislation addresses a priority of the Commission and of our constituents.

Based on preliminary data from the County's Age-Friendly Needs Assessment currently underway, transportation service concerns are one of five cross-cutting factors consistently mentioned as impacting the ability of older adults to thrive to their full potential. Yet, fully three-quarters of study participants report have never used paratransit or another transportation program such as Call-n-Ride, citing poor reliability, disqualifying eligibility rules, and costs. Those who have used these programs report ongoing challenges with accessing reliable and affordable transportation services, especially for medical appointments in neighboring jurisdictions and in Baltimore. We doubt Montgomery County is unique in this regard

With one exception, all the hospitals in Montgomery County are part of multi-jurisdictional health systems and it's common for those hospitals to refer patients to other facilities in those systems. This bill would create the mechanism for each County to work with the Area Agency on Aging to determine the most effective means of serving the transportation needs of its elderly and disabled residents, and then cooperate with other counties and the networks of

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providers to establish interjurisdictional paratransit service routes. Equally important, this bill provides appropriated funds to support the development of these cooperative arrangements.

The Commission on Aging fully supports efforts to make paratransit services more responsive to older Marylanders, and so we respectfully urge the return of a Favorable decision and report on HB0058.

Thank you for your support of this legislation.