

SB786 - Employment Services - Paratransit - 2 (2).

Uploaded by: CRYSTAL ALI

Position: FAV

Date: February 25, 2026
To: Senator Pamela Beidle, Chair, Senate Finance Committee
From: Crystal Ali, Employment Specialist, The Arc Prince George's County
Re: Support - SB786 Transportation of Persons With Disabilities - Transportation Network Companies – Requirements

Chair Beidle and committee members:

I serve as an Employment Specialist at The Arc Prince George's County. I am writing to express my strong support for **SB786**. As a concerned advocate and family member, I know how the lack of accountability and flexibility in **public managed transportation services** creates dangerous and unsustainable situations for the disability community.

Reliable transportation is not just a convenience; it is a fundamental right. For many, it is the difference between health and crisis. This bill establishes the necessary service requirements to ensure that persons with disabilities can travel safely and with dignity, closing the gaps left by current public transit failures.

To illustrate why this legislation is urgent, I wish to share the following real-life concerns:

- **Medical Necessity & Health Risks:** For individuals with disabilities, paratransit uncertainty can be a direct trigger for medical or mental health crises. Many cannot simply wait indefinitely for a late vehicle without a crisis occurring. No person should have their health jeopardized by a dispatch delay or a "no-show."
- **Safety & Security:** When a **managed transportation** provider fails to arrive, it creates an immediate safety concern. Leaving a vulnerable individual stranded—often in areas that become unsafe after business hours—is unacceptable.
- **Employment Stability:** Workers with disabilities are frequently late or unable to reach their jobs because their paratransit provider claims an area is outside their restricted service zone. Access to a livelihood should not be dictated by arbitrary boundaries or inefficient routing.
- **Caregiver Crisis:** When parents and caregivers face their own emergencies, the unreliability of government transit becomes a massive burden, making it nearly impossible to coordinate essential transportation for their loved ones.

By passing **SB786**, we can bridge the gap in our transit system and provide inclusive, accountable options for those who rely on these services for their survival and independence. I urge a **favorable report** on this bill.

Sincerely,

Crystal

SB786.DDCouncil.Support.pdf

Uploaded by: Rachel London

Position: FAV



Senate Finance Committee

February 25, 2026

SB 786: Transportation of Persons With Disabilities – Transportation Network Companies - Requirements

Position: Support

The Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council along with The Arc Maryland, Maryland Association of Community Services, and People on the Go Maryland, work together to improve the opportunities and outcomes for Marylanders with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). As such, we support SB 786 as it provides flexibility to transportation network companies, which increases access to transportation services for people with disabilities.

WHAT does this legislation do?

- This bill requires that transportation network companies (ex. Uber, Lyft, Zipcar) that contract with the Maryland Transit Administration to serve people with disabilities to conduct an annual background screening of all drivers.
- It also exempts transportation network companies from doing a complete criminal history background check through the Criminal Justice Information System Central Repository of the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services.

WHY is this legislation important?

- Accessible transportation options for people with disabilities remain one of the greatest barriers to participation in full community life.
- People with disabilities rely on various transportation options to access important resources, such as: urgent health services, food and other groceries, employment, and social and educational advancement opportunities.
- The flexibility of utilizing a transportation network company for travel can address crucial transportation service gaps for people with disabilities.

We support SB 776 because it is a step towards increasing comprehensive and accessible transportation options for people with disabilities in Maryland.

Contact: Rachel London, Executive Director, Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council: RLondon@md-council.org

MD SB786 FAVORABLE_Paratransit 2026.pdf

Uploaded by: Rob Garagiola

Position: FAV



Uber Technologies, Inc.
1725 3rd Street
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February 25, 2026

The Honorable Pamela Beidle, Chair
The Honorable Antonio Hayes, Vice Chair
Senate Finance Committee
Miller Senate Office Building, Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: SB 0786 – Transportation of Persons With Disabilities - Transportation Network Companies - Requirements – FAVORABLE

Dear Chair Beidle, Vice Chair Hayes, and Members of the Senate Finance Committee,

I would like to begin by thanking Senator Guzzone for sponsoring this important legislation. SB 786 represents a vital step toward modernizing Maryland's paratransit system to better serve residents with disabilities while ensuring fiscal responsibility for Maryland taxpayers.

Under the current system, paratransit fleets often operate at capacity, leading to leaving Maryland residents stranded for hours at a time waiting to be picked up by their service. SB 786 provides the tools to manage peak demand and reduce missed trips. Traditional paratransit trips cost the MTA approximately \$64.41 per trip. Shifting just 20% of these trips to a TNC-supplemented model could save the State \$24 million annually.

It takes a forward-thinking approach to explore these regulatory updates to make these changes that save the tax payer money and modernizing this framework positions Maryland alongside other innovative, large-scale agencies like WMATA and MBTA that have successfully utilized Transportation Network Companies (TNCs) to drive down costs and reduce rider wait times.

SB 786:

- removes certain administrative requirements designed for direct employees while mandating comprehensive annual background screenings.
- These annual checks meet some of the highest security standards in the transportation industry.

This model is being used by over 18,000 residents in Maryland already through the WMATA program. Meanwhile, Pennsylvania similarly has a program which also reduces wait times and saves costs. The current framework has great intentions but is costing the tax payer millions of dollars, while preventing paratransit customers from being picked up from their dialysis appointments in a timely manner. already



successful in neighboring jurisdictions like D.C. and Pennsylvania—Maryland can provide more efficient, reliable, and cost-effective transit for those who need it most.

I respectfully urge a FAVORABLE vote on SB 786.

Jon Kuehn
Head of Partnerships
UberTransit

SB786 - Paratransit.pdf

Uploaded by: Robert Malone

Position: FAV

Date: February 25, 2026
To: Senator Pamela Beidle, Chair, Senate Finance Committee
From: Rob Malone, CEO, The Arc Prince George's County
Re: Support - SB786 Transportation of Persons With Disabilities - Transportation Network Companies – Requirements

Thank you, Chair Beidle and committee members, for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of SB786.

As the CEO of The Arc Prince George's County, I hear firsthand about the challenges faced by individuals relying on paratransit services. The most common concerns I hear are delays in pick-up times, extended wait times and long routes, which disrupt schedules and create significant anxiety for people with disabilities. Additionally, late arrivals for critical appointments, such as medical visits, can lead to costly consequences.

SB786 provides a much-needed solution, giving local transit agencies an additional tool to meet the transportation needs of individuals with disabilities. This bill would also align Maryland with other transit systems in the greater Washington area—such as MetroAccess and Uber Dispatch—that already integrate alternative transportation options to address demand.

For areas with limited paratransit drivers, this bill is especially crucial. It offers a practical, scalable solution to help ensure timely, reliable service.

Transportation is a key social determinant of health and wellness. We must take every reasonable action to address these transportation barriers, ensuring equal access for all. I stand in strong support of SB786, and I am pleased to share that self-advocates from our community are also fully behind this effort.

I urge you to move this bill forward with a favorable report. Thank you.

Uber Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Sarah Gardiner

Position: FAV

First, I would like to express my appreciation and gratitude for the valuable service that Metro Access provides. If it weren't for Metro Access, many people with disabilities would not be able to get to work and necessary appointments. The purpose of this testimony is to bring attention to Metro Access deficiencies experienced by my niece and how the partnership with Uber has significantly improved her commuting experience. If my niece is experiencing these issues, there are so many others experiencing the same thing. In my opinion, Metro Access should re-examine their commute routes and timeline standards to better serve the population their mission is charged to serve. FYI: For a 27-mile ride (College Park to Clinton), the **Metro Access acceptable standard to get her home is 169 minutes = 2 hours 49 minutes**. With no traffic, it's a 40-minute ride, with traffic it's about 1 hour, 15 min. Uber gets her home between 1 hour to 1 hour, 15 min. Of all the people that need reliable and responsive service, it should be Metro Access recipients.

My 39-year-old niece has an intellectual disability and epilepsy. She takes medication to prevent seizures twice a day, 7:30am and 7:30pm. If she misses a dose, she will have a seizure.

My niece works two days a week at UMD, College Park. On Wednesdays, she clocks in at 10am; her Metro Access pickup window is between 7:30 to 8:15am. On Thursdays, she clocks in at 11am, her Metro Access pickup window is around 8:30 to 9:15am. I find these pickup windows acceptable because it is often a shared ride. The problem was on the ride home. I formally complained to Metro Access three times, once by phone and twice online (once to the board of directors). My last response from the Board of Directors was an acknowledgement of concerns, my message would be shared, and an appreciation of my input. At that point, the ARC and I worked out the Uber option for her return trip.

A summary of my complaints to Metro Access:

30 Apr 25: Complaint via phone - My niece clocked out at 5pm, was picked up at 5:30pm, dropped off at home at 8pm. The driver left PG county, went into DC, Georgetown Hospital to drop off/pick up, back into PG County. Response from Metro: Her ride was 160 minutes, within the 169-minute Metro Access standard.

27 Aug 25: Complaint via online portal – My niece's first day back to work after summer break. There were problems with pickup. The ride showed up, parked, then the ride was cancelled. Lots of calls to dispatch. It was eventually resolved. But it took a lot of involvement from my niece, the driver, and me.

3 Sep 25: Complaint via online portal - My niece was picked up somewhere between 5:30 and 6pm, and didn't return home until 8:40pm this evening. Once again, the driver departs PG county to pick up/drop off people in DC.

Now, she takes Metro Access to work from Clinton to UMD, College Park two days a week and she returns from work via Uber. The Uber arrangement was worked out with the ARC in response to my niece consistently returning home from work via Metro Access between 6:30

and 8pm. She clocks out on Wednesdays at 4pm and Thursdays at 5pm. She works a 6-hour day, but while taking Metro Access roundtrip, she was gone for almost 12 hours per day.

Since my niece began taking Uber on the way home, all of our frustrations were eliminated. She gets home at a reasonable time, which is within 1.25 hours (at the latest) of pickup, to take her medication and spend time with her 5-year-old daughter. Her quality of life has improved.

Below is a summary of the pros and cons of each transportation method.

Metro Access		Uber	
Pro	Con	Pro	Con
Safe, reliable	169-min standard for 27 mile-route	Safe, reliable	Sometimes final price higher than originally quoted
Reserved ride	Random cancellations	Reserved ride	No customer service #, all comm via App
	Shared ride	Not shared ride	Not enough \$\$ to cover entire month of trips
	Indirect route	Direct route	
	Frustrated/tired	User-friendly App	
	Often missed medication	See driver status (car type, driver name, arrival)	
		Shared trip details	
		Follow the route, see exact ETA	
		Communicate notes to driver (exact p/u location), back dock, etc.	
		Good customer service, but prefer to call	
	Home late	Home faster	

Please let me know if you have further questions.

Regards,

Sarah Jane Gardiner

202-280-4781

ATU 1300 - SB 786 - Transportation of Persons With

Uploaded by: Brian Wivell

Position: FWA

Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1300

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Proudly representing the transit workers of the MTA!



SB 786 - Transportation of Persons With Disabilities - Transportation Network Companies - Requirements

Favorable with Amendments
Senate Budget & Taxation Committee
February 25th, 2026

ATU Local 1300 represents over 3,000 transit workers at the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA). This includes bus operators, bus mechanics, rail operators, rail maintenance workers, and more. Our members keep Maryland moving every day.

We have concerns with any legislation that decreases requirements on Transportation Network Companies (TNCs). TNCs are explicitly designed from their initial business model to undercut public transportation by lowering the compensation of transit workers through exempting them from commonsense worker protections, like unemployment benefits, minimum wage requirements, and payroll taxes. After the TNCs sufficiently undermine the existing public transit services, the TNCs dramatically increase their costs or request subsidies from the very same entities they tried to put out of business. This isn't speculation, this is the very process that has worked out in public view since Uber, Lyft, and rideshare companies began.

It is already unfortunate that MTA contracts with any TNCs. Public transit work, including vital paratransit services and flexible demand services, should be done in-house by workers employed by a public transit agency. This legislation seems to repeat the same process initiated over a decade ago, where TNCs carved themselves out of existing regulations in favor of them largely self regulating their own industry by operating as "platforms" for independent contractors. But this ignores the fact that any claims that operators on these platforms cannot set their own prices, only accept or deny work offered to them algorithmically designed to suppress their compensation.

While we oppose all use of TNCs, including those with more modern and public transit friendly images like Via, we are amenable to amendments that may limit the applicability of this bill's exemption to just the MTA's Call A Ride service. We propose this amendment in order to protect the work that our sister local, ATU 1764, has done to organize MTA's contracted paratransit workers. Their testimony should include proposed amendments to this bill, but we have attached them below for your reference.

Appendix: Amendment to SB 786

New text in bold. Removed text is struck through.

24 (II) THE REQUIREMENTS OF PARAGRAPHS (2) AND (3) OF THIS
25 SUBSECTION DO NOT APPLY TO A TRANSPORTATION NETWORK COMPANY UNDER
26 CONTRACT WITH THE ADMINISTRATION THAT FACILITATES THE PROVISION OF
27 TRANSIT SERVICES TO PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES THROUGH TRANSPORTATION
28 NETWORK OPERATORS **AS PART OF THE ADMINISTRATION'S CALL-A-RIDE
SERVICE.**

We are flexible on language so long as the amendment makes it clear that these statutory exemptions to the standard background check process only apply to Call A Ride services.

MD SB 786 ATU Testimony 2-23-26.pdf

Uploaded by: Raenelle Cole

Position: FWA

ATU Local 1764
President Raenelle Cole

SB 786 - Transportation of Persons With Disabilities - Transportation Network Companies - Requirements

Favorable with Amendment
Senate Finance Committee
February 25th, 2026

ATU Local 1764 represents thousands of transit workers that are employed by the privatized transit contractors that help serve this state. Most notably, our members work for Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) Mobility Link paratransit service contractors. For years, these workers have fought hard to drag these jobs out of being low wage, high turnover positions that were ignored and exploited. That fight is far from over but we have made substantial progress over the last few years to help bring these jobs closer to the middle class.

I am here today to oppose any bill that might make it easier for Transportation Network Companies to undermine paratransit careers in favor of a model where transit workers are mislabeled as independent contractors. By using TNCs the state is subsidizing misclassification, undermining the Unemployment Insurance system, cheating itself of payroll taxes, and more. The state should not be doing this, even if it may save money for the MTA.

The MTA and its contractors should always hold themselves accountable to the highest standards. That goes especially for transit workers assisting the elderly and those with disabilities. Exempting TNCs contracted by the MTA from the standard process of background checks and trainings makes no sense. We need stronger standards, especially when it comes to improving the quality of MTA Mobility Link services. Our goal at Local 1764, as always, is to turn paratransit work into a career path, not just a temporary job. Anything that lowers standards on TNCs undermines that mission. Paratransit riders deserve high quality, safe, and reliable transportation. TNCs cannot be allowed to self regulate their own standards and exempt themselves from the legal requirements put in place by statutes.

We have reason to believe that this bill might be targeted just at MTA's Call A Ride service. If that is the case, we believe that an amendment to the bill should be put forward to limit its scope just to contractors for Call A Ride. We believe that the amendment offered on page two would do just that.

We urge an unfavorable report for the bill as written, but if the bill's scope is limited to Call A Ride services we may be supportive.

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2-25-2026 FWA SB0786 Transportation of Persons Wit

Uploaded by: Ronza Othman

Position: FWA



Live the life you want.

From: Ronza Othman, President
National Federation of the Blind of Maryland
15 Charles Plaza, #3002
Baltimore, MD 21201 president@nfbmd.org

To: Senate Committee on Finance

The members of the National Federation of the Blind of Maryland urge the Senate finance Committee to give a favorable report with amendment to SB0786. This bill exempts transportation network companies under contract with the Maryland Transit Administration that facilitate transit service to persons with disabilities through transportation network operators from certain requirements relating to a criminal history records check and a required course for employees.

The bill as written is problematic to the extent that it exempts transportation network companies contracting with the MTA to require their operators to undergo training related to the proper treatment of people with disabilities. Unfortunately, transportation network companies have a poor record of respecting the rights of passengers with disabilities, particularly those who use guide dogs or other service animals. While the MTA may make every effort to explicitly require compliance with nondiscrimination laws in its contracts with transportation network companies, and while these companies often have policies against discrimination themselves, it is all too clear that many operators are not aware of their nondiscrimination obligations. We therefore believe that the bill should explicitly require that operators for transportation network companies that contract to provide service to people with disabilities undergo training about their obligations not to discriminate against passengers with disabilities, particularly those who use service animals.

For these reasons, we ask for a favorable report conditional on the above amendment on SB0786. For questions, please contact me at President@nfbmd.org or at 443-426-4110.