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MAYOR

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SB 0909

March 4, 2026

TO: Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee
FROM: Nina Themelis, Director, Mayor's Office of Government Relations
RE: Senate Bill 909 – Vehicle Laws - Fully Autonomous Vehicles

POSITION: FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS

Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **supports** Senate Bill (SB) 909 **with amendments**.

SB 909 establishes a comprehensive statewide framework governing the operation of fully autonomous vehicles (AVs) on Maryland highways. The bill permits operation without a human driver when the vehicle meets defined safety and performance standards, including the ability to achieve minimal risk in the event of system failure and compliance with Maryland Vehicle Law. It also requires submission of a First Responder Interaction Plan before deployment and authorizes the Motor Vehicle Administration to review and restrict unsafe vehicles as needed.

The legislation clarifies that, when active, the automated driving system is considered the vehicle operator for the purposes of Maryland Vehicle Law. It establishes registration requirements and creates clear insurance standards. At the same time, the bill sets limits on personal and biometric data collection, limiting the potential of this technology for mass surveillance. However, SB 909 restricts the ability of jurisdictions to regulate AVs in any meaningful way. Allowing unrestricted testing of AVs within the public Right-of-way creates unnecessary public risk in addition to other negative externalities stemming from operational and logistical needs surrounding deployment.

As such, the BCA respectfully requests the revision of language preempting jurisdictions from creating reasonable safeguards around the testing and deployment of AVs on roads in Baltimore City and our peer jurisdictions. The State must work in coordination with local jurisdictions to ensure that we are working collaboratively toward allowing autonomous vehicles on our roadways. Given that Baltimore City is a densely populated urban environment, we believe that we will be more highly impacted than most other jurisdictions and need to retain the ability to regulate the presence of autonomous vehicles within our boundaries. The Administration should be required to share all notices concerning autonomous vehicles that are not in safe mechanical condition with the relevant local jurisdictions in which the vehicles are operating to ensure our

local public safety entities are able to ensure that only vehicles in safe operating condition are on our roadways. Each company that seeks to operate autonomous vehicles within Baltimore City should be subject to local regulatory oversight and controls before deployment in order to determine the parameters of their operations and ensure that the localized impacts of such operations are taken into consideration. The safety and welfare of our residents is of critical importance and we must be able to provide safeguards to the hundreds of thousands of Baltimore City residents and millions of annual visitors as this technology is tested on our roadways.

For the above stated reasons, the BCA respectfully requests a **favorable** report on SB 909, **with the above amendments.**