



March 4, 2026

The Honorable William “Will” Smith
Chair, Senate Committee on Judicial Proceedings
Room 2-East, Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

RE: Support SB 909 – Automated Driving Systems

Dear Chair Smith and members of the Committee:

On behalf of Chamber of Progress, a tech industry association supporting public policies to build a society in which all people benefit from technological advances, **I respectfully urge you to support SB 909**, which establishes a clear, statewide framework for the safe deployment of autonomous vehicles in Maryland.

We are strong supporters of autonomous vehicles (AVs) due to their significant social, economic, and environmental benefits. AVs have the potential to save thousands of lives and expand mobility for thousands of people across Maryland. They also have the potential to create hundreds of thousands of high-paying jobs and connect people to millions of other jobs. Finally, AVs will reduce roadway emissions and help Maryland achieve net zero emissions by 2045. By creating a pathway for AV deployment, this bill will unlock these benefits for Maryland residents.

AVs will bring safer streets, reduce the number of accidents, and save lives

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) released crash data reporting for the first half of 2023, with over 19,000 lives lost.¹ In 2022, nearly 43,000 lives were lost in traffic-related fatalities.² Between 2019 and 2023, 2,858 people lost their lives in vehicle crashes and 208,587 people were injured in Maryland.³

¹ National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. “NHTSA Estimates Traffic Fatalities Continued to Decline in the First Half of 2023.” Sept. 28, 2023.

<https://www.nhtsa.gov/press-releases/2023-02-traffic-fatality-estimates>

² National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. “NHTSA Estimates for 2022 Show Roadway Fatalities Remain Flat After Two Years of Dramatic Increases.” U.S. Department of Transportation, Apr. 20, 2023.

<https://www.nhtsa.gov/press-releases/traffic-crash-dto-more-than-eath-estimates-2022>

³ Zero Deaths Maryland. “Maryland Crash Data.” n.d. <https://zerodeathsmd.gov/resources/crashdata/>

Research shows that at least 90% of car crashes are caused by human error,⁴ and around 30% of traffic deaths involve alcohol impairment,⁵ meaning thousands of lives are lost each year to a behavior we already know how to stop. Over 82% of traffic deaths in Maryland between 2019 and 2023 were due to drug or alcohol impairment, aggressive driving, speeding, and distracted driving – all entirely preventable.⁶

By removing human error from the roads, AVs can help eliminate the leading causes of crashes and fatalities. A series of studies from 2023 found that autonomous ridesharing services in Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Phoenix experienced 57% fewer police-reported crashes and 85% fewer crashes involving injuries compared to human drivers.^{7,8}

With more than 200 million autonomous miles logged nationwide, some AV operators report ~90% fewer serious-injury or fatal crashes.⁹ **If that reduction translates to Maryland, advancing their large-scale adoption could prevent over 2,572 deaths and 187,728 injuries in the next five years.**

Likewise, in 2023, crashes involving large trucks killed more than 15 people every day.¹⁰ Autonomous trucks do not suffer from fatigue, distraction, or impairment. Early deployments are already proving this point. Aurora, a U.S.-based autonomous trucking company, is already demonstrating the real-world potential of these safety gains. As of October 2025, the company has logged more than 100,000 driverless miles with a perfect safety record¹¹ under a comprehensive safety case that combines millions of virtual simulations with extensive closed-course and on-road testing.¹² In critical scenarios, autonomous trucks outperform human drivers. For example, Aurora's trucks can detect hazards hundreds of meters away seconds before the naked eye, even at night.¹³ Taken

⁴ Santokh Singh. *Critical Reasons for Crashes Investigated in the National Motor Vehicle Crash Causation Survey*. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Feb., 2015.

<https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/812115>

⁵ National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. "Drunk Driving." n.d.

<https://www.nhtsa.gov/risky-driving/drunk-driving>

⁶ Zero Deaths Maryland. "Maryland Crash Data." n.d. <https://zerodeathsmd.gov/resources/crashdata/>

⁷ Kristofer D. Kusano et al. *Comparison of Waymo Rider-Only Crash Data to Human Benchmarks at 7.1 Million Miles*. arXiv, Oct. 24, 2024. <https://arxiv.org/abs/2312.12675>

⁸ John M. Scanlon et al. *Benchmarks for Retrospective Automated Driving System Crash Rate Analysis Using Police-Reported Crash Data*. arXiv, Jul. 24, 2024. <https://arxiv.org/abs/2312.13228>

⁹ Waymo. "Safety." n.d. <https://waymo.com/safety/>

¹⁰ National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. *Traffic Safety Facts Research Note: Overview of Motor Vehicle Traffic Crashes in 2023*. Apr., 2025.

<https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813705>

¹¹ Aurora Innovation, Inc. "Aurora Expands Driverless Trucking Service from Fort Worth to El Paso." *Business Wire*, Oct. 28, 2025.

<https://ir.aurora.tech/news-events/press-releases/detail/128/aurora-expands-driverless-trucking-service-from-fort-worth-to-el-paso>

¹² Aurora. *Aurora's Safety Case Framework*. Jan., 2023. <https://safetyscaseframework.aurora.tech/gsn>

¹³ Aurora. "Detecting a pedestrian running across the highway."

<https://aurora.tech/capabilities/detecting-a-pedestrian-running-across-the-highway>

together, these results show that autonomous trucking can be deployed carefully and responsibly, improving road safety rather than undermining it.

AVs will also increase transportation options for communities that are currently underserved or face mobility challenges

In neighborhoods where public transit options are scarce, autonomous vehicles can increase transportation options and connect residents to mobility hubs.¹⁴ Many Marylanders do not have reliable access to a car. In Baltimore alone, roughly one in three residents lives in a household without a vehicle, making it harder to reach work, school, healthcare, and other essential services.¹⁵ Autonomous vehicles can widen access to safe, reliable transportation.

For people living with disabilities who cannot drive or are underserved by public transit, AVs can increase access to mobility. 12.4% of Maryland residents have a disability.¹⁶ Further, only 1 in 4 Americans with disabilities participated in the labor force in 2025.¹⁷ Mobility challenges and inaccessible transit options present significant obstacles for people with disabilities trying to reach jobs and education.¹⁸ Public transit and paratransit options do not fully meet these communities' needs, with unreliable service times and longer commutes to access pharmacies, hospitals, and schools.¹⁹ According to the Urban Institute, AVs can improve paratransit services, making them more affordable and flexible for riders because they can provide customizable, curb-to-curb service.²⁰ [A study by the National Disability Institute found that this shift could generate an estimated 4.4 million additional jobs for people with disabilities.](#)²¹

¹⁴ Jonathan Andrews. *How AVs are transforming public transportation*. May Mobility; Cities Today. Jan. 3, 2024. <https://media.maymobility.com/May-Mobility-Cities-Today-AVs-Transforming-Public-Transportation-Case-Study.pdf>

¹⁵ Daniel Zawodny. "Baltimore Transit Bike Car Free." *The Baltimore Banner*, Oct. 28, 2025. <https://www.thebanner.com/community/transportation/baltimore-transit-bike-car-free-RBTLSGOYPBAMT-HJORPKTWSXLBM/>

¹⁶ Maryland Department of Planning. *Percent of People With a Disability in Maryland and its Jurisdictions, 2024*. Sep., 2025. https://planning.maryland.gov/MSDC/Documents/American_Community_Survey/2024/Charts/Disability-Sep-2024.pdf

¹⁷ Society for Human Resource Management. "Workforce Participation Among People With Disabilities Reaches Historic High, Addressing Labor Shortages – New SHRM Study Finds." Press release, Oct. 16, 2025. <https://www.shrm.org/about/press-room/workforce-participation-among-people-with-disabilities-reaches-h0>

¹⁸ Dominic Modicamore et al. *Economic Impacts of Removing Transportation Barriers to Employment for Individuals with Disabilities Through Autonomous Vehicle Adoption*. National Disability Institute and ICF, Dec. 30, 2022. <https://www.nationaldisabilityinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/ndi-economic-impactsofremovingtransportationbarriers.pdf>

¹⁹ TransitCenter. *The State of Transit Equity: SF Bay Area*. n.d. <https://transitcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/BayAreaFactSheet.pdf>

²⁰ Olivia Fiol and Sophia Weng. "Shared Autonomous Vehicles Could Improve Transit Access for People with Disabilities If Regulated Appropriately." *Urban Wire*, Oct. 4, 2022. <https://www.urban.org/urban-wire/shared-autonomous-vehicles-could-improve-transit-access-people-disabilities-if-regulated>

²¹ Dominic Modicamore et al. Dec. 30, 2022.

The AV industry will be a powerful engine for job creation and economic opportunity

Evidence shows that AVs are poised to be a powerful force for job creation. Our research found that nationwide, replacing 13% of vehicles on the road with AVs over the next 15 years could create 455,000 jobs.²² These positions span manufacturing, technology, logistics, and maintenance – everything from software engineers and system operators to vehicle inspectors and safety specialists.

Importantly, these are well-paying jobs. Our report found that 82% of AV-related roles pay above the national median wage, and many don't require a college degree.²³ Workers in production, maintenance, and repair occupations often enter with a high school diploma or postsecondary certificate, yet still earn solid middle-class wages, especially as AV fleets expand and demand for skilled technicians rises.

This shift also won't happen overnight. Instead, automation is expected to roll out gradually, giving workers time to retrain and transition into new roles.²⁴ AV deployment requires ongoing human oversight in operations, maintenance, and fleet management, meaning that even as driving tasks become automated, human workers will remain central to the technology's success.²⁵ Educational partnerships are already springing up to support this future workforce, from autonomous service technician programs in Pennsylvania to advanced manufacturing training in California.²⁶

With the right investment and policy support, Maryland can be part of that vanguard, building on its existing tech and manufacturing strengths to capture the high-paying, accessible jobs that the AV industry brings.

AVs promote sustainability efforts

Autonomous vehicles also promote sustainable transportation systems. According to the Southwest Research Institute, autonomous vehicles can be up to 20% more fuel efficient

²² Steer and Chamber of Progress. *Opportunity AV: How Many and What Types of Jobs Will Be Created by Autonomous Vehicles?* Chamber of Progress, Mar., 2024. <https://progresschamber.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Opportunity-AV-How-Many-and-What-Type-of-Jobs-Will-Be-Created-by-Autonomous-Vehicles.pdf>

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ John J. Leonard et al. *Autonomous Vehicles, Mobility, and Employment Policy: The Roads Ahead*. MIT Task Force on Work of the Future, n.d. <https://ouravfuture.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/WotF-2020-Research-Brief-Leonard-Mindell-Stayton.pdf>

²⁵ April Horency. "Systems Engineering Team Reveals How Automated Vehicles Are Transforming Labor in Taxi Services." *School of Engineering & Applied Science, The George Washington University*, Nov. 17, 2023. <https://engineering.gwu.edu/systems-engineering-team-reveals-how-automated-vehicles-are-transforming-labor-taxi-services>

²⁶ Steer and Fourth Economy. Mar. 2025.

than human-driven vehicles.²⁷ Since autonomous vehicles are programmed to follow traffic rules and speed limits, they will ultimately use less energy. Most AVs are also predicted to be electric, making them a cleaner transportation option than vehicles using internal combustion engines.²⁸ Deploying autonomous vehicles can help Maryland achieve its net-zero emissions goal by 2045.²⁹

AV trucking offers a more efficient and resilient freight future, lowering costs for families

As the trucking industry faces 90% turnover and a projected 160,000-driver shortage by 2030,³⁰ the national truck driver shortage costs the freight industry \$95.5 million weekly.³¹ Notably, Maryland has a tough trucking job market, with 38% daily turnover and an average 6.2-day hiring time, making driver recruitment especially challenging.³²

Increased consumer prices and delayed shipments are both consequences of the current crisis in the trucking industry. Consequently, trucking companies have been competing to attract and retain drivers by offering greater compensation and more substantial bonuses.³³ Rising fuel and labor expenses have driven up shipping costs, which in turn have caused an increase in the price of consumer goods.³⁴ Low-income families are disproportionately affected by these price hikes; the cost of essential goods has risen by up to 50%.³⁵

Autonomous trucking offers a solution to address the gap created by a strained labor market, retention and overhead costs, and high demand for timely shipping. Continuous,

²⁷ Southwest Research Institute. "SwRI Achieves 20% Improvement in Vehicle Fuel Efficiency With Connectivity, Automation." Oct. 6, 2020.

<https://www.swri.org/newsroom/press-releases/swri-achieves-20-improvement-vehicle-fuel-efficiency-connectivity-automation>

²⁸ Richard Nunno. *Issue Brief | Autonomous Vehicles: State of the Technology and Potential Role as a Climate Solution*. Environmental and Energy Study Institute, Jun. 24, 2021.

<https://www.eesi.org/papers/view/issue-brief-autonomous-vehicles-state-of-the-technology-and-potential-role-as-a-climate-solution>

²⁹ Maryland Department of the Environment. "Climate Pollution Reduction Plan." *Maryland Department of the Environment*, n.d. <https://mde.maryland.gov/programs/air/ClimateChange/CPRP/Pages/Overview.aspx>

³⁰ Michelle Fleury. "How will the US deal with a shortage of 80,000 truckers?" *BBC News*, Nov. 8, 2021.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/business-59136957>

³¹ Pamella De Leon. "Report shows truck driver shortage costs freight industry \$95.5 million weekly."

Commercial Carrier Journal, Feb. 10, 2025. <https://www.ccjdigital.com/business/article/15736724/truck-driver-shortage-costs-freight-industry-955-million-weekly>

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Don Lee. "Facing record labor shortages, trucking firms battle fiercely for drivers." *Los Angeles Times*, Dec. 7, 2021. <https://www.latimes.com/politics/story/2021-12-07/facing-record-labor-shortages-trucking-firms-battle-fiercely-for-drivers>

³⁴ AFP Global Logistics. *The Impact of Fuel Prices on Supply Chain Transportation*. AFP Global Logistics, Feb. 3, 2025. <https://afplus.com/impact-fuel-prices-supply-chain-transportation/> afplus.com

³⁵ Frost & Sullivan Institute. "The Unequal Burden of Inflation: Implications for Vulnerable Populations and Strategies for Resilience." Frost & Sullivan Institute Blog, Aug. 26, 2025.

<https://frostandullivaninstitute.org/the-unequal-burden-of-inflation-implications-for-vulnerable-populations-and-strategies-for-resilience>

efficient AV freight operations reduce delays, congestion, and deadhead miles,³⁶ cutting logistics costs that raise prices for families. With freight running around the clock, AV trucks help stabilize the cost of groceries and everyday goods.

Autonomous vehicles present tremendous opportunities to make Maryland's roads safer and cleaner while expanding transportation options and economic opportunities, and this bill would ensure that. For these reasons, we respectfully urge you to **support SB 909**. We are more than happy to be a resource as you continue working on this issue, and thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brianna January". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being more prominent.

Brianna January
Director of State & Local Government Relations, Northeast US

³⁶ Truckstop. "Deadhead Miles: Definition, Costs and How to Avoid Them." May 28, 2025.
<https://truckstop.com/blog/deadhead-miles/>