

STATE OF MARYLAND
OFFICE OF PEOPLE’S COUNSEL
Paula M. Carmody, People’s Counsel
6 St. Paul Street, Suite 2102
Baltimore, Maryland 21202
410-767-8150; 800-207-4055
www.opc.maryland.gov

BILL NO.: Senate Bill 642
Task Force to Study Transportation Access

COMMITTEE: Senate Finance

HEARING DATE: February 27, 2019

SPONSORS: Senators Klausmeier, et al.

POSITION: Informational

Senate Bill 642 would create a Task Force to study and make recommendations to improve access to employment, training and education opportunities, health and rehabilitation services, and other social services for those individuals and families who do not own vehicles or have access to public transportation. The Task Force would include a number of organizations with stated missions to serve these households without access and in need of the stated services. The bill requires the Task Force to conduct a number of assessments and reviews, and make recommendations to the Governor and General Assembly on or before June 30, 2020 and December 1, 2021. For the reasons stated below, the Office of People’s Counsel (OPC) recommends that copies of the statutory reports be submitted both to the Public Service Commission (PSC) and OPC.

In the normal course of things, neither the Commission nor OPC would be involved in issues of transportation access. However, an intersection of transportation and energy issues has developed over time in response to concerns about greenhouse gas emissions and the interest in electrification of transportation. With regard to the latter, utility regulators are being asked to

address issues related to electric vehicles and utilities. In that realm, stakeholders have raised equity issues presented by electricity customers who do not own vehicles, never mind electric vehicles.

We know that a disproportionate percentage of low-income households are “zero vehicle” households.¹ For the last ten years, two-thirds of Maryland car sales involve used car purchases, without regard to income.² In a recent report, the Northeast States for Coordinated Air Use Management noted concerns about the number of barriers to providing clean mobility, never mind EVs, to low-income and disadvantaged communities.³ To address these concerns, OPC had recommended that the PSC establish a Work Group to assess transportation needs of low-income households as a precursor to identifying ways to encourage EV use among low-income households.

However, a Task Force such as the one proposed by House Bill 642 would be much better suited to this task. While much of the data and information gathered by the Task Force may not be relevant to the work of the Commission, it is likely that some of the Task Force data would be useful to the Commission and OPC in assessing future appropriate utility actions around EV adoption and EV integration into the utility distribution system.

OPC therefore recommends that Senate Bill 642 require the submission of its interim and final reports to both the Commission and the Office of People’s Counsel.

¹ See <http://nhts.ornl.gov/briefs/PovertyBrief.pdf>. “About 24 percent of households in poverty do not own a vehicle while over 98 percent of \$100,000+ households own at least one vehicle.”

² See <http://www.mva.maryland.gov/about-mva/statistics/car-sales-statistics>.

³ See *Northeast Corridor Regional Strategy for Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure 2018-2021*, May 16, 2018, page 10, available at www.nescaum.org.