

LETTER OF TESTIMONY

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VOTE FOR HB 920 – Motorcycles - Overtaking and Passing Vehicles

Dear Environment and Transportation Committee,

I write to urge you to vote in favor of HB 920 – Motorcycles - Overtaking and Passing Vehicles

My name is Jesse Monford. I currently serve in the United States Navy and I have been riding motorcycles since 2016. As someone who rode every day (work & pleasure), the ability to split lanes provides a great deal of safety and security when executed correctly. There are still a handful of riders, primarily messengers, "SQUIDS" (ones who don't ride with proper gear) and teenagers who split lanes at inappropriate times or far beyond the flow of traffic who will pay the price for their indecisive or abrupt behavior. At the end of the day it removes most rider's biggest fear and that's being rear ended as that would most likely end a riding career and perhaps even a life. Lane splitting reduces pollution, reduces congestion, saves fuel, preserves the bike because it remains in motion, which ultimately produces airflow to the engine in the extremely humid East Coast heat, and lastly, saves lives, especially in the warmer months. Here's how I describe the feeling: Light up a charcoal grill on a hot summer day. Straddle that grill wearing jeans and put on a leather jacket while you're at it. Now you get an idea of what it is like to be stopped in traffic on a motorcycle in 80-degree weather with a searing engine between your legs. No one is saying that this is anyone else's fault but ours, although this is the life that we chose, we still value our own lives as well. If you are a car driver, you may be asking yourself, what do I care about making life more comfortable for motorcyclists? Here's what's in it for you. Mr. or Mrs. Car Driver: Splitting lanes during a traffic jam effectively increases the number of lanes on the road so that motorcycles can clear through and not increase the total of number of vehicles stuck on the road. I know your misery would love my company, but really, how does that help you get home faster? I learned to ride motorcycles in a fairly big city. Sunny San Diego, open roads, etc., and quickly realized there is ample clearance between cars for pretty much any road-worthy motorcycle. Cars don't typically turn into other cars, so there is an extra safety buffer there when you are between two cars. See, a gap in traffic

on one side that isn't there on the other side of traffic, slows down because that's a scenario where you can be cut off by a motorist that didn't bother checking their mirrors. I personally feel safer in traffic when I splitting lane. If there isn't enough space, I stay between lanes and wait for a space to open up. Being allowed to split lanes doesn't mean that's the only place you are allowed to ride. You can get back in lane any time when condition is no longer safe to split, or also when traffic is lifted to a normal flow. Riding a motorcycle is all about situational awareness. I can see much further up the road when I'm between lanes and have more time to react to what lies ahead. Also, bouncing off side of inattentive driver's car is more survivable than to be crushed from both front and back. The danger from the rear far outweighs the danger from the side. A motorcyclist can react better to what's in front than to a threat from behind, so, whether I split lanes or not, I cannot eliminate driver error, but I can take precautions against what's in front of me. Lane splitting is not only safer and faster, it is also sometimes necessary. A car has four wheels, it can go really slowly without falling over. A motorcycle only has two wheels, so when going too slow, it wobbles and can fall over. When standing still, motorcyclists have to put our feet on the ground in order to keep our transport upright. But in stop/start traffic, this becomes a bit tricky. The moment you move your feet off your foot pegs, your balance is affected, especially at very slow speeds, and quite often as you put your feet down, the traffic moves a bit, and then you have to move forward again, the feet have to come out and the feet go back on the pegs and so forth. Saying admittedly, it does take some practice and you have to observe the flow of traffic. Eventually you do get to read it pretty accurately and there is another thing to educate the car drivers about: A motorcycle's clutch is the lever on the left side of the handle bars, the gears are the left foot and the brakes are on the right, foot & hand brakes. Now when going really slow traffic where I cannot lane split for whatever reason, like narrow roads or other obstacles, my left hand actually cramps up from pulling the clutch in and out constantly, and of course, it's not good from a maintenance point of view either. It really is much easier to pass the cars slowly. We will wave at your kids in the car and we will thank you for not getting us killed or injured today.

Also, I would encourage watching this short video as well. Maybe it would give some great insight to approving this practice in the state of Maryland:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JNGD9AAIfFU>

Thank you for your consideration. I hope you will vote in favor of HB 920.

Sincerely,

Jesse Monford