

February 5, 2020

Written Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 319

Testimony of:

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Delegate John E O'Connor
State Delegate, Fraternal Order of Police Lodge #9
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County Commissioner John E O'Connor, District 3
St Mary's County Government
41770 Baldrige St
Leonardtown, MD 20650

Honorable State Senators,

Thank you for taking the time to consider alternate forms of enforcement of the "Move over law." As you can see from the above, I wear many hats and serve my communities in many capacities and roles throughout our great state. The FBI's Law Enforcement Officer Killed and Assaulted (LEOKA) study shows the number to cause accidental deaths in the past decade as being "struck by a vehicle." This study showed that 101 Officers died in the line of duty by being struck by a vehicle while performing tasks outside of their patrol vehicle. One out of every six officers who died accidentally is killed by being hit by a passing car.

Maryland is no stranger to our Tow Truck Drivers, Fire, EMS, and Law Enforcement Officers being struck by drivers that fail to pay attention, fail to move over, and fail to slow down. A quick google search reveals the epidemic of public safety being struck is only growing.

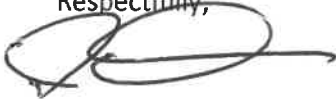
I am a 19-year law enforcement veteran. I have served in many capacities during my tenure as a peace officer. Most of that time, as a traffic enforcement officer and accident reconstructionist. I have seen the carnage on our roadways. I have responded to scenes of officers struck, firefighters struck, EMS struck, and tow truck drivers struck while performing their duties. I have been hit three times while on traffic stops with mirrors of passing vehicles. All these times, I was clearly off the roadway, but the driver failed to move over and was not paying attention. I am fortunate. It was just a mirror that struck me. I have seen worse.

The "Move over law" is one of the most complicated laws to enforce, and motorists know it. A single officer conducting a traffic stop cannot leave that stop to pull over and cite a driver for failing to slow or move over. It takes teams to enforce this law, and those resources are not readily available.

We need an extra set of eyes. Something that is watching out for us while ensuring the motorist is aware there is absolutely a consequence if I do not move over. I am not advocating for blanket coverage of automated move over enforcement, but just for the ability to have it. Like the school zones and red-light systems, driver behavior changes when they know there is a possible consequence of an action.

As Senators, you have in front of you a lifesaving piece of legislation. It may just be ink on paper now, but you can breathe life into it. You are honoring those that paid the ultimate sacrifice and protecting those that are willing to make it. I thank you for your time and consideration of this bill, and I hope you will provide us with the ability to employ this readily available lifesaving and changing technology.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "JOHN E. O'CONNOR", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

John E O'Connor