

TO: The Honorable Delegate Kumar Barve, Chair
Members, Environment and Transportation Committee

FROM: Joanne R. Rund, Fire Chief
Baltimore County Fire Department

DATE: January 14, 2021

RE: SUPPORT - House Bill 118 - Vehicle Laws - Injury or Death of Vulnerable
Individual - Penalties

The Baltimore County Fire Department has over 3000 career and volunteer personnel that respond to 12,228 roadside incidents over the last year. When analyzing these incidents, 2,264 were on divided highways with speeds of over 50 mph. Incidents such as vehicle accidents, fluid spills, vehicle fires, public assistance and more. All of these types of calls put our first responders in harms way. Our personnel are trained to make the scene as safe as possible for the citizens as well as themselves. However, sometimes that is not enough.

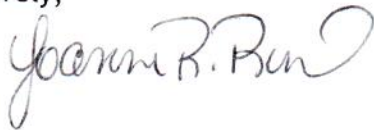
Operations on roadways are high-risk, high-frequency events. With distracted driving, drivers under the influence, along with road and weather conditions and related traffic, firefighters are more at risk now than ever before. Every year there are reports of firefighters, ems workers, police officers and tow-truck drivers killed due to roadside accidents, not to mention all the near miss incidents that could have been fatal. Responders being stuck while working on roadways has become an almost daily occurrence.

There has been a national level urgency to all Fire Chiefs to continue to provide safety alerts and training program regarding roadway safety due to the national level of deaths and near miss incidents.

On a personal level, I have experienced losing a fellow public safety member to being struck and killed while working during speed enforcement on Rt. 32. The driver's only punishment for this was \$310 for negligent driving and speeding. Unfortunately, our loss is the life of a public servant.

It is our hope that if House Bill 118 is passed, it will help act as a deterrent to driving while distracted and help reinforce the Move Over laws we have in place today. It is for these reasons that I respectfully ask for a favorable report on House Bill 721.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Joanne R. Rund". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the typed name "Joanne R. Rund".