



March 5, 2024

The Honorable Marc Korman  
Chair, House Environment and Transportation Committee  
Room 251, House Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

**HB 1447: Motor Vehicles - Autonomous Vehicles - Standards, Requirements, and Prohibited Acts**  
**Position: Unfavorable**

Chair Korman:

The Alliance for Automotive Innovation<sup>1</sup> (Auto Innovators) appreciates the opportunity to provide the following comments on HB 1447, which will make Maryland a national outlier and will greatly curtail automated vehicle (AV) investment, development, and operations in the state.

**AVs and Safety**

The cars and trucks that consumers are buying today are the safest vehicles ever built. Even so, more than 42,000 people died in traffic crashes in the United States in 2022, including 566 in Maryland<sup>2</sup>. Traffic deaths have surged 30% over the past decade, with nearly 10,000 more fatalities when compared to 2013 numbers.<sup>3</sup>

The evidence shows that driver behavior – drivers who are impaired, unbelted, speeding, or driving recklessly – are significant factors in the increase in roadway fatalities. That is what vehicle safety is a priority and automated vehicle technology holds the promise to increase safety and reduce these numbers.

**AV Landscape**

A little over a year ago, we released a report which surveyed the existing AV projects in the U.S.<sup>4</sup> We found a robust and growing environment for AV development. At the time the report was released, there were over 80 AV companies working in 30 states – between those companies there were nearly 170 different AV related programs in 120 cities.

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<sup>1</sup> From the manufacturers producing most vehicles sold in the U.S. to autonomous vehicle innovators to equipment suppliers, battery producers and semiconductor makers – Alliance for Automotive Innovation represents the full auto industry, a sector supporting 10 million American jobs and five percent of the economy. Active in Washington, D.C. and all 50 states, the association is committed to a cleaner, safer and smarter personal transportation future.

[www.autosinnovate.org](http://www.autosinnovate.org).

<sup>2</sup> <https://zerodeathsmid.gov/resources/crashdata/crashdashboard/>

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.ghsa.org/resources/news-releases/NHTSA-2022-Traffic-](https://www.ghsa.org/resources/news-releases/NHTSA-2022-Traffic-Deaths23#:~:text=Traffic%20deaths%20have%20surged%2030,roadway%20fatalities%20and%20dangerous%20driving)

[Deaths23#:~:text=Traffic%20deaths%20have%20surged%2030,roadway%20fatalities%20and%20dangerous%20driving.](https://www.ghsa.org/resources/news-releases/NHTSA-2022-Traffic-Deaths23#:~:text=Traffic%20deaths%20have%20surged%2030,roadway%20fatalities%20and%20dangerous%20driving)

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.autosinnovate.org/posts/papers-reports/AV%20Report.pdf>

AVs regularly move passengers in San Francisco, Phoenix and Las Vegas; deliver goods in Houston; and transport freight across the southwest.

It's not everywhere. Yet. Unleashing the full potential of AVs will ultimately depend on the ability of companies to ramp up the number of AVs on the road. This will reduce costs and increase public confidence in the technology.

### **HB 1447 Creates Unnecessary Obstacles**

Autonomous driving has the attention of Washington, D.C., and the state's – and rightly so. Government has a role to play here, and both state and federal policy must create a clear pathway for AV deployment.

On top of the obvious safety benefits, AVs can provide accessible transportation options for seniors and individuals with disabilities and a chance to reduce traffic congestion and create new jobs and supply chains.

Innovative technologies that can make a difference have already been developed or are well on the way to being made commercially available. The right policies need to be in place to support the continued development of AV technology.

Unfortunately, HB 1447 will create major obstacles to deployment of AV technology in Maryland. HB 1447 will establish a remarkably limited framework for AV operations in Maryland by authorizing a person to operate an AV only if the person is seated in the front seat of the vehicle while the AV is in motion. It would also prohibit AVs from being operated on a highway to transport passengers unless the operation is for a personal and non-commercial purpose.

Such a ban on AV operations in the state will deny its residents the benefits of the technology. Those who currently lack reliable transportation to work or school, seniors, people with disabilities, and many others who would benefit greatly from the increased mobility that AVs could provide, will lack access to the various use cases for AVs. For these individuals, AVs hold tremendous potential to transform mobility, broaden economic participation, and support greater independence. However, HB 1447 would deny them the benefits of AVs by prohibiting them from riding alone in an AV.

### **Failure to Act**

The U.S. is among many nations racing to be the first to develop and bring these new AV safety technologies to market. The winners of this competition will gain clear advantages in market position and in writing the rules of the game – which is one more reason why there's no time to waste to improve the regulatory landscape to bolster research, testing, and public adoption of these important safety features.

Even if we don't get our act together in the U.S., the technology isn't going away. We'll cede our AV leadership to China and other nations already setting the right conditions to make AVs a reality.

**Conclusion**

AVs hold tremendous promise for a cleaner, safer, smarter future for mobility, but only if we work together on smart policies that are modernized to address the tremendous opportunities that AV technologies hold when it comes to improving roadway safety and expanded mobility for millions of Americans. As our companies start to make plans and critical decisions about where and how and when to build and deploy these technologies, they need to know that policies are in place here in the U.S. that will support those plans and those decisions.

Unfortunately, we cannot support the approach in HB 1447 and request an unfavorable report.

Thank you for your consideration of our position. For more information, please contact our local representative, Bill Kress, at (410) 375-8548.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Josh Fisher". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Josh" and last name "Fisher" clearly distinguishable.

Josh Fisher  
Senior Director  
Alliance for Automotive Innovation.