



ADVOCATES
FOR HIGHWAY
& AUTO SAFETY

March 5, 2024

The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr., Chair
The Honorable Jeff Waldstreicher, Vice Chair
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
Maryland General Assembly
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Chair Smith and Vice Chair Waldstreicher:

Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety (Advocates), an alliance of consumer, safety, medical, public health and law enforcement groups and insurance companies working together to pass highway and auto safety laws that prevent crashes, save lives, reduce injuries, and contain costs, supports enactment of Senate Bill (SB) 939/House Bill (HB) 1111. This legislation will improve safety by repealing an exclusion to the crime of reckless endangerment for conduct involving use of a motor vehicle. SB 939/HB 1111 is critical and timely.

In 2021 there were 561 traffic fatalities in the state, a 10 percent increase since 2012, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA).ⁱ Moreover, state data show there were over 28,000 injury crashes and more than 108,000 total crashes in 2022.ⁱⁱ In addition to being tragic, motor vehicle crashes are costly. Maryland incurred \$5.9 billion in economic harm, which is equivalent to \$977 per resident, due to motor vehicle crashes according to a 2019 analysis.ⁱⁱⁱ Clearly, traffic safety is a serious issue that urgently needs improvement.

SB 939/HB 1111 is a sensible way to make Maryland safer by eliminating a dangerous loophole in the current law that exempts actions taken with a motor vehicle from the reckless endangerment statute. We urge you to advance SB 939/HB 1111.

Sincerely,

Peter Kurdock, General Counsel

ⁱ State Traffic Safety Information for Maryland (2021), NHTSA, available at <https://cdan.dot.gov/stsi.htm>.

ⁱⁱ Statewide Crash Summary Report (2022), Maryland Department of Transportation available at: <https://zerodeathsmd.gov/resources/crashdata/>.

ⁱⁱⁱ The Economic and Societal Impact of Motor Vehicle Crashes, 2019, NHTSA, Feb. 2023, DOT HS 813 403, available at <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813403>.