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**SB315 Vehicle Laws—Bicycle Lanes and Shoulders – Yielding Right-of-Way -  
(Sarah Debbink Langenkamp Memorial Act)**

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

Support

February 22, 2024

Good afternoon Chair Smith and members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee. I am Karen Kalla, volunteer legislative aide and member of the executive council for AARP Maryland, and resident of Montgomery County. AARP has more than 850,00 members statewide. AARP is the largest nonprofit, nonpartisan organization representing the interests of Marylanders who are age 50 years and older and their families. Key priorities of our organization include creating livable and sustainable communities where individuals can affordably and safely age in place. On behalf of our 850,000 members, we support **SB315 Vehicle Laws – Bicycle Lanes and Shoulders – Yielding Right-of-Way – (Sarah Debbink Langenkamp Memorial Act)** and thank Senator Kelly for sponsoring this important legislation.

SB315 specifies that cars traveling on a road must allow three feet between them and a bicyclist unless road conditions do not allow that much space or the bicyclist veers into the three-foot space. The bill delineates a fine of no more than two months in prison and/or \$2,000.

As a bicyclist, who is 72 years old, I greatly appreciate this practice being established and enforced by legal parameters. I started bicycling as a child as many of us do. Upon graduating from high school, I worked two summers in Ocean City where a bike was my only means of transportation. Later in life, I would drive from my home in Rockville to Glen Echo or the C&O Canal to bicycle the rest of the 12 miles to my office near Capitol Hill. My partner and I have bicycled countless times the rural roads and mountains near Cumberland where he had a home – and the roads in Annapolis and Anne Arundel County where I had a home. We still bicycle the Rock Creek, Capital Crescent, and Mt. Vernon trails on a regular basis, or around town for pleasure.

I know what it feels like to bicycle on a road where three-foot rules are publicized by signs and where they don't exist or are not followed. I also know what it feels like to be intentionally blasted by black smoke from a passing truck – a practice known as ‘rolling coal’ where a diesel truck is altered to put out thick black smoke, often in the direction of cyclists, joggers, and electric cars. This too should be unlawful – but I digress.

Three feet is a small price to ask to protect a life. Most motorists are respectful of the three-foot rule and signs where they exist. The roads to Bay Ridge and Thomas Point in Anne Arundel County are good examples of signage working.

We need more of these signs and practices with strict accountability throughout the state. It does little good to tell drivers they need to respect and give space to bicyclers, then do nothing to hold them accountable when they do not.

Bicycling is an environmentally respectful way to travel for work or daily activities; it is a joyful and healthful pastime; and it reduces the number of cars on the roads. It also provides a healthy social activity for everyone – including seniors. Bicycling should be encouraged and supported in every way.

Bicyclist safety and accessibility are key elements in livable and sustainable communities. Maryland is experiencing the development of major Town Center communities that center on accessibility without cars – an admirable and necessary step. In this process, it is essential to promote the use of bicycles (and pedestrians) and ensure the safety of those who choose this mode of transportation. These individuals are contributing to a better quality of life for all by giving up their cars for shopping or pleasure. AARP appreciates the support that SB315 gives to those who would prefer to bicycle to the grocery store, doctor appointment, visit friends, or just enjoy a ride for its own pleasure.

AARP supports and advocates for increased mobility—safe and accessible infrastructure that provides a wide range of connected transportation options, including public transit, cycling, and walking. Another key aspect of this infrastructure is housing located within easy walking/bicycling distance of public transportation, grocery stores, and other shopping, healthcare, recreation, and cultural institutions.

SB315 offers important opportunities and guidance for enhancing bicycle safety and access for people of all ages to improve the quality of life in communities throughout the state and *enabling more people to comfortably age in place*. For these reasons we ask the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee to issue a favorable report on SB315. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Tammy Bresnahan at [tbresnahan@aarp.org](mailto:tbresnahan@aarp.org) or by calling 410-302-8451.