



SB 315: Vehicle Laws - Bike Lanes and Shoulders - Yielding Right-of-Way (Sarah
Debbink Langenkamp Memorial Act)
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
Washington Area Bicyclist Association – FAVORABLE

February 22, 2024

Chair Smith and Committee Members,

The Washington Area Bicyclist Association (WABA) supports SB 315, the Sarah Debbink Langenkamp Memorial Act.

WABA is an advocacy organization with 1,200 Maryland members, founded in 1972. We fight for a just and sustainable transportation system where walking, biking, and transit are the best ways to get around.

Sarah Debbink Langenkamp was crushed by a truck driver while legally cycling in a bike lane on River Road, Maryland State Road 190, in August 2022. The driver, Santos Reyes Martinez, pleaded guilty but received only token penalties for the highly negligent driving that took Sarah's life.

Penalties serve as a deterrent and as a motivator for education and driver vigilance, but only when they are adequate. Current Maryland penalties for hitting a bicyclist in a bike lane are not adequate. SB 315 seeks to impose penalties proportionate to the severity of the violent harm inflicted by a driver who hits a bicyclist in a bike lane. SB 315 will provide the deterrence and motivation that is currently lacking.

Penalties alone, of course, are not sufficient. Eleven bicyclists were killed by drivers on Maryland roads in 2022, the year Sarah Langenkamp was killed. Fifteen bicyclists were killed on Maryland roads in 2023, an increase in four from the year before. Maryland pedestrian deaths increased from 130 in 2022 to 155 last year. To state that Maryland is making no progress towards meeting our Vision Zero commitment is an understatement. Our state's goal is zero road deaths and serious injuries by 2030, yet Maryland road violence is getting worse. The impact on Maryland families including Sarah Langenkamp's is devastating.

The Safe System approach calls for comprehensive improvements to eliminate traffic fatalities including safe road users, safe vehicles, safe speeds, safe roads, and post-crash care. WABA recognizes the role that safe infrastructure plays and works to win improved road design and engineering; expand the network of low-stress, protected bike lanes and trails; create safe pedestrian crossings; and encourage more equitable access to bicycling, via programs such as e-bike purchase rebates.

We appreciate that the State Highway Administration conducted a public safety walk and undertook a safety study for the stretch of MD 190 where Sarah Langenkamp was killed. However, that this response was reactive and so limited is disconcerting. The Administration and the General Assembly

must provide the attention, resources, and funding needed to create safe transportation infrastructure – in accordance with the Complete State Roads initiative that WABA launched last fall and with WABA’s 2022 Equitable Bikeways Investment proposal – coupled with penalty reform, to draw some redemption from the roads deaths of 304 pedestrians and bicyclists, including Sarah Debbink Langenkamp, on Maryland’s roads in just the last two years.

The Washington Area Bicyclist Association urges a Favorable SB 315 committee report and Senate floor vote.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this legislation.

Seth Grimes, WABA Maryland organizer
seth.grimes@waba.org