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TESTIMONY OF SENATOR SHELLY HETTLEMAN

SB915 - BALTIMORE COUNTY – VEHICLE LAWS – PRIVATE ROADWAYS IN RESIDENTIAL
SUBDIVISIONS AND COMMUNITIES

SB915 is in the same posture as HB528, which passed, as amended, unanimously out of the Environment and Transportation Committee and the House and Senate floors. The Baltimore County Delegation voted this bill favorably in both chambers. It addresses a critical gap in traffic enforcement and public safety on private roadways within residential subdivisions and communities in Baltimore County. This authority already exists in Calvert County – it would allow police officers in Baltimore County to enforce Maryland’s vehicle laws on one group of private roads in one particular residential neighborhood as a pilot program, ensuring that residents, pedestrians, and families in that neighborhood can reach out to the police when needed to enforce laws related to reckless driving.

Under current law, unless a private roadway is specifically open to the public, police officers have limited authority to enforce traffic laws in these areas. This has led to situations where speeding, reckless driving, and other dangerous behaviors go unchecked and unpunished simply because they occur on privately owned roads within a HOA residential community. These roadways are still used by residents, children, and visitors like any other roadway in the state. Clearly, the risks posed by irresponsible driving are no different from those on public roads.

In light of concerns expressed by Baltimore County because of its high number of private roadways, we are proposing agreed-upon amendments that would create a pilot program in the one neighborhood that has come to our delegation with their concerns. The Baltimore County Executive supports this approach as does the Baltimore County Senate delegation who voted unanimously for the bill.

I urge a favorable report to support this narrowly drawn pilot program. Thank you.