



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Bill: HB 977 - Criminal Law - Manslaughter by Vehicle or Vessel - Increased Penalties
(Jamari's Law)**

Position: Favorable

Good afternoon, Chair Clippinger, Vice Chair Bartlett, and members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Delegate Brian Crosby, and I am here today to present HB 977, Jamari's Law.

This legislation is named for Jamari Duckett, who was a resident of St. Mary's County. In 2022, Jamari was killed in a car accident caused by a drunk driver, who was found to be driving at speeds between 76 and 91 miles per hour in a 40-mile-per-hour speed limit zone. Jamari was only eighteen years old. You will hear from the Duckett family today, as well as many other families whose loved ones were taken from them far too soon, in such a brutal and violent way.

Under current law, a first offense for manslaughter by vehicle or vessel (gross negligence) carries a maximum of 10 years in prison, while subsequent offenses carry a maximum of 15 years. Since such a crime is considered a "non-violent" offense, those convicted could be eligible for parole after serving as little as one-quarter of their sentence. That means that even when a person is sentenced to the maximum sentence, they can still be released from prison after serving as little as 2.5 years. Although the driver who killed Jamari Duckett was sentenced to the maximum possible sentence of 10 years in prison, he could still be released in as little as 2.5 years. This bill will increase the maximum penalties to 20 and 30 years, respectively.

It is important to note that this bill will not create a mandatory minimum. It will only give judges greater flexibility when sentencing people found guilty of this crime.

I respectfully request a favorable report on HB 977. Thank you for your consideration.