

Good day everyone,

My name is Cris, though most people know me as Storm or Bubblez in the community. I am here today to speak as a motorcyclist and as someone who has experienced firsthand the dangers riders face on Maryland's roadways. I'm in strong support of Senate Bill SB0068, the D Torch Motorcycle Road Safety and Awareness Act.

This bill addresses a critical and ongoing issue where motorcycle safety is too often compromised not by rider error, but by driver inattention and lack of awareness. D Torch Motorcycle Road Safety and Awareness Act seeks to correct that by requiring the Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration to include motorcycle safety awareness questions on the driver skills examination which would cover visibility, lane positioning, safe following distances, and crash prevention. Too many riders are seriously injured or killed in collisions with other vehicles whose drivers fail to see, understand, or properly react to motorcycles on the road. This is not an abstract policy change; it is a life-saving measure.

As a rider, I have experienced numerous close calls and serious accidents because drivers "didn't know." I've had a driver pull out of an apartment parking lot directly onto a main road without looking, another drifted into my lane while on a cellphone, and another drove toward me head-on while she was on the wrong side of the road totaling out my bike and almost taking my life. In one of my most recent accidents, I was told simply, "She didn't see me." In each situation I was left with a damaged motorcycle and either fractures, bruised ribs, burns, broken bone and/ or other injuries while the driver walked away without a scratch.

While my physical injuries have almost all healed, the emotional loss did not. The person who taught me not only how to ride better, but how to survive on two wheels; my friend, my heart, my teacher, my other half and the man that vowed to keep me safe; was struck and killed just over a month after my own accident. He was struck by an elderly driver making a left turn that could have merely waited. So due to this gentleman a great person is not here today, but I am. And I stand before you daily trying to be strong, resolute, and committed to fighting for this bill and bringing awareness right next to his mom so that others do not have to endure the pain of losing someone they love because drivers "didn't know." One of the best riders I have ever known can not be here. Even the best training nor the best rider can overcome a driver who does not understand motorcycles. A motorcycle cannot win against a vehicle, and ignorance should no longer be an excuse.

Motorcycle collisions are not rare, and the data supports the need for legislative action. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, motorcyclists are 28 times more likely to die in a crash than passenger vehicle occupants, and they are 5 times more likely to be injured. In a majority of motorcycle-involved crashes, the car or truck driver is found to be at fault due to inadequate attention, turning errors, or failure to yield the right of way. States that have implemented enhanced awareness campaigns and rider education programs have seen measurable reductions in motorcycle collisions involving other vehicles. When drivers are taught what to look for and how to safely share the road, crashes decrease.

Bill SB0068 is a simple, effective solution. Education saves lives. It equips drivers with the knowledge they need and gives riders a better chance to make it home. If drivers understand how to properly “look twice” and interact safely with motorcycles, we save lives. It tackles both prevention and accountability. It is not enough to expect riders alone to shoulder responsibility for their safety; we must ensure that all road users are equipped to share the road with knowledge and awareness.

In closing, I respectfully urge the members of this committee and the Maryland Legislature to support D Torch Foundation and vote in favor of Senate Bill SB0068, D Torch Motorcycle Road Safety Act. This Bill honors the memory of riders we have lost, protects those who ride today, and ensures that families across Maryland do not have to suffer needless loss tomorrow. Take appropriate measures so more riders make it home to their families because mine didn't make it back home to me.

Thank you for your time and consideration.