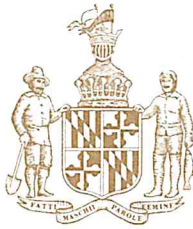


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The Maryland House of Delegates

ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Delegate Dana Stein Testimony in Favor of House Bill 721 Vehicle Laws-Injury or Death of Vulnerable Individual-Penalties

This bill fills a critical gap in existing law by providing appropriate penalties when drivers hurt or kill a vulnerable road user. I don't believe a driver who hurts or kills someone should walk away with only a \$200 traffic citation. And even though the responding police officer may feel the same way, they don't have any other penalty options under current law.

What this bill does is define "vulnerable individuals," to be pedestrians or someone who is riding a bike, motorcycle, motor scooter, or other unprotected vehicle. It then says that if a driver kills or seriously injures such an individual, they will be subject to a fine of up to \$2,000, will have their license suspended for at least 7 days and not more than 6 months, and may be subject to other penalties.

This bill was recommended by the Maryland Bicycle Safety Task Force and is based on a model law provided by the League of American Bicyclists. It is part of a national movement to fill a critical policy gap in many state laws to promote safer driving and save lives.

In 2019, Delegate Steve Lafferty sponsored a similar bill that this committee approved unanimously and the House passed unanimously. HB 721 is updated to clarify that a driver cannot pay the fine to avoid showing up in court.

I'm joined by a witness who is an expert on the issue as well as someone who was hit by a car while biking and seriously injured. The driver only received a \$110 fine, even though they admitted to simply trying to beat the bicyclist through the intersection.

Please give HB 721 a favorable report so that we can strengthen our message about the importance of safety on the roads and, hopefully, better protect vulnerable individuals.