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March 5th, 2020

House Environment & Transportation Committee
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

Re: Support for House Bill 721 – Vehicle Laws – Injury or Death of Vulnerable Individual - Penalties

Dear Chairman and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to address you today regarding what I feel to be, very important and needed legislation for those of us who live in Maryland.

Prior to the event which brings me before you today, I would ride anywhere from three to four thousand miles a year. On July 20th, 2017 in Columbia, MD, I decided to do a quick 20-mile bike ride before starting my workday. On my way back, I was t-boned by someone driving a minivan, resulting in my suffering a broken neck and right sided paralysis. I was transported to Shock Trauma where I underwent surgery to fix my broken neck. During that time, I learned from the Police report that the person driving that day, saw me approaching in the opposite direction, and admitted to the police that he thought he could beat me in time to make his left turn onto US29 Northbound.

I have since through intensive PT and OT, regained the ability to walk and use my right arm and hand. Nevertheless, as I stand before you today, there is not a second that goes by, despite the best treatment, where I am not in constant pain on both the left half of my body and my right arm. I am left with complications that will require constant monitoring the rest of my life because of the resulting damage to my spinal cord. An injury such as the one I suffered not only affects me, but it has a ripple effect that impacts those close to me and others. It has a long-lasting impact on personal relationships and my ability to carry out the activities of daily living.

The person responsible for this received a ticket for failure to yield and a \$110.00 fine. According to court records, his license had been suspended for failure to pay the fine, but around a year or so later he paid the fine and his license was reinstated. Also, according to court records, he has a prior conviction for speeding, 60 mph in a 45mph zone, and his license was also suspended at that time for failure to pay the associated fine.

Currently, there is no legislation that would warrant a second look at those individuals who hurt someone riding a bicycle through their negligent actions while driving a vehicle. Several states have Vulnerable Road User (VRU) Laws in place and Virginia just recently passed SB 437 on March 4th, 2020 and their VRU Bill is being sent to Governor for signature.

Some of the key points of the legislation being proposed are:

- Allows for stronger penalties
- Allows us to promote public awareness of the threat posed by motor vehicles to vulnerable users of the roads
- Through the increased awareness of stronger penalties and education, help in deterring bad driving behavior around vulnerable users of the roadways

Please consider supporting this needed legislation to help protect vulnerable users of the roads in Maryland.

Thank you for your time.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nigel Samaroo', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Nigel Samaroo, MPH