



HB721 -- Vehicle Laws - Injury or Death of Vulnerable Road User --Penalties
House Environment and Transportation Committee
March 6, 2020

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Position: Support

My name is Joshua Feldmark and I write this as a representative of Bike Maryland as well as the undersigned organizations. We represent cyclists of all abilities across the state, Cyclists who ride 5 miles around the park with their families, for transportation, to a 100 mile ride. Bike Maryland has over 18,000 members from across the state. Additionally, we consistently organize or advocate on behalf of pedestrians and many other non vehicle transportation users. Below is the testimony Kim Lamphier gave to this committee on this bill last year.

Over a two-day period I met 3 cyclists who all told the similar stories -- they were struck by an automobile, sustaining injuries serious enough to require long hospital stays and months of rehabilitation. One you will hear from today. And you can find a video about Jerre Taylor at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ttsa77yR5EQ>. The third, Jack Grant, a resident of Montgomery County was unable to attend today. And the drivers -- they just paid traffic tickets.

Together, these cases show the huge gap in current law if a driver seriously injures or kills a pedestrian or cyclist. They can write a check for \$110 or \$150 and be done with it. Even when the driver is clearly at fault, that's it.

HB721 -- Vulnerable Road User -- will help to fill this gap, add a degree of fairness, and provide a catalyst for continuing education for drivers.

As stated by the League of American Bicyclists, Vulnerable Road User (VRU) Laws provide important legal protection to bicyclists and other persons who are not protected by steel cages. VRU laws operate on the principle of general deterrence – by providing an increased penalty for certain driver behaviors that lead to the serious injury or death of vulnerable road users people will be deterred from doing those behaviors around those users.

A driver who kills or seriously injures a pedestrian, cyclist, or someone using a mobility device should receive more than just a small traffic fine.

Vulnerable road users are all of us — walkers, cyclists, wheelchair users, children on training wheels, a parent pushing a stroller, or someone with a disability. These users don't have the safety protections that a vehicle affords and are therefore especially vulnerable to death or serious injury when struck by a car.

Nine States (CT, DE, FL, HI, OR, UT, VT, WA) have VRU laws and since we fully expect Maryland to be the bike friendliest state in the country, this law is necessary moving forward.

According to the report from the Maryland Task Force on Bicycle Safety, from 2011 through 2015, there were a total of 3,908 police-reported bicycle crashes in Maryland. The overall trend during these five years has shown a gradual increase in the number of bicycle crashes. Based on the police crash report, 313 crashes resulted in serious injury and 32 crashes were fatal.

The majority of bicyclists involved in a police-reported crash were between the ages 10 and 59, and 83% of the bicyclists were male. The crash rates were highest among 10-17-year-olds (13.7 crashes per 10,000 population) and 18-24-year-olds (14.2 crashes per 10,000 population).

HB721 will provide increased protection for vulnerable road users by providing a continual reminder to drivers to take extra care when encountering pedestrians, cyclists, and people using mobility devices. And, when they fail to take this extra care, providing a meaningful, effective punishment.

Please pass HB721. Thank you.