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Judicial Proceedings Committee

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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

February 4, 2020

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

**Senate Bill 199 – Vehicle Laws – Overtaking and Passing Bicycles**

Senate Bill 199 is a long overdue measure that simply updates Maryland law to permit what responsible drivers already do when they pass a cyclist: move over to the left lane when it is safe to do so. Currently, drivers are not legally allowed to cross-over into the left lane while in a no-passing zone, even when the driver has a clear line of sight that shows no oncoming traffic and when not doing would put the cyclist in significant danger.

Nearly 40% of vehicle-cyclist accidents that result in serious injury or death occur when the vehicle and the bike are going in the same direction. Our law should promote best practices, not prohibit them, and the best practice in this case is clearly to move across a double-yellow line to promote bicyclist safety when there is no oncoming traffic.

SB 199 would allow motorists to move over to the left-lane while in a no-passing zone as long as they respect the right of way of the cyclist and any oncoming traffic.

Many drivers already engage in this practice and while the Maryland State Police generally do not cite crossing a double-yellow line to safely pass a bicyclist, the law is still on the books and could be selectively enforced, which raises equity concerns. We have an obligation as a legislature to align the law with best practice and that is what this bill does.

This bill is supported by Governor Hogan's Task Force on Bicycle Safety on Maryland Highways and is identical to the bill that passed the full House last year. In the past, the State Police have raised concerns about language that made the driver's discretion the legal basis. We've addressed these concerns by adopting the same language as it relates to yielding and turning right on red.

Therefore, we respectfully request a favorable report on SB 199.