

**Senate Bill 237**

**February 4, 2020**

**Protective Headgear Requirement for Motorcycle Riders- Exception**

**Testimony in Opposition  
Senate Judicial Proceedings**

Chairman William Smith Jr. and members of the committee,

My name is Tara Reed Carlson, I am the Director of Community Outreach and External Affairs for the R Adams Cowley Shock Trauma Center, University of Maryland and the legislative committee chair for Traumanet, Maryland's coalition of 9 Trauma Centers, both of whom I represent today.

Working within Maryland's Trauma Centers we saw over 20,731 patients last year, with over 37 percent of the cases being traffic or motor vehicle related. Motorcycles (as defined by the ACRS crash report) accounted for 4 % (830 people) of these crashes.

- There were 4,985 motorcycle fatalities nationally in 2018. (38%) of those fatalities were not wearing a helmet.
- Nearly \$3.4 billion in economic costs and \$21 billion in comprehensive costs were saved in 2016 by the use of motorcycle helmets.

My testimony is in opposition to Senate Bill 237 because of the above statistics. These are preventable injuries for your constituents.

- Motorcycles are the most hazardous form of motor vehicle transportation.
- NHTSA estimates that 1,872 lives in the United States were saved by motorcycle helmets and 749 additional fatalities could have been prevented if the riders had worn helmets (2017).

Traumatic brain injury is a serious, potentially life-long injury that can result from a motorcycle crash, especially when the rider is not wearing a helmet. Lifetime care for a traumatic brain injury can easily amount to millions of dollars. Helmet use reduces the cost of medical treatment, length of hospital stay and probability of long-term disability for those riders injured in crashes. The provisions in the bill to improve safety, two years riding experience and passing a safety course before being permitted to ride un-helmeted, will not mitigate the severe and serious

damages that will be caused by repealing the state's all-rider motorcycle helmet law. If SB237 is passed, it will result in an increased financial burden on Maryland's emergency medical services, hospitals, Medicaid and ultimately, every Maryland taxpayer.

Motorcycle crash deaths are costly, and very often preventable. The single most effective way for states to save lives and save money is a universal helmet law. (CDC)

- Motorcycle helmets are currently preventing \$17 billion in societal harm annually and \$538 million in Maryland alone
- Another \$8 billion in economic societal harm could be prevented if all motorcycle riders wore helmets, in Maryland \$29.8 million can be saved.
- The annual medical costs alone from un-helmeted motorcyclist injuries has been estimated to be over \$250 million
- Helmets reduce the risk of death by 37% for operators and 41% for passengers.
- Helmets reduce the risk of head injury by 67%.

We urge you to oppose this legislation and protect your constituents from preventable injuries and/or fatalities by requiring a motorcycle helmet for all riders.

Thank you.

Respectfully submitted,

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<https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/812826>

<https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/812806>

<https://www.cdc.gov/policy/hst/hi5/motorcycleinjury/index.html>

<http://saferoads.org/issues/motorcycle-helmet>

<https://www.iihs.org/iihs/topics/t/motorcycles/fatalityfacts/motorcycles>

[https://www.ghsa.org/sites/default/files/2018-05/ghsa\\_motorcyclists18.pdf](https://www.ghsa.org/sites/default/files/2018-05/ghsa_motorcyclists18.pdf)

[MIEMSS annual report 2018-2019](#)