

**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 Bella Chant, I am the Supervisor of the Injury Prevention Program at the R Adams Cowley Shock Trauma Center, University of Maryland and I also sit on the Board of the Partnership for a Safer Maryland.

I am a certified rehabilitation registered nurse and spent the earlier part of my career caring for patients who were severely injured after suffering a trauma. I took care of a patient who was covered with third degree burns over half their body, I took care of a patient that had the lower part of his leg amputated after his toe fell off from unchecked diabetes, but one of the ones that sticks out to me the most was the gentleman that suffered a traumatic brain injury after crashing on his motorcycle.

He had to have a portion of his skull surgically removed to allow for the swelling that was putting pressure on his brain. He looked at himself in the mirror, with his half of his skull missing, telling me that all he wanted was to jump on his motorcycle again to drive home. He was entirely unaware that he nearly died, he had no inkling that his motorcycle was totaled, and he had no idea that he was never going to return to that carefree ride he enjoyed so much before his life was changed.

That is one of the curses of having a brain injury; burn wounds can be covered up, lost limbs can be replaced with a prosthetic, but a brain will never fully heal.

That was back in Minnesota, a state that to this day only mandates helmets for people under the age of 18.

When I moved to Maryland, I decided I couldn't take the heart ache of working with patients that were hurting every day and transitioned into the field of injury prevention because why just treat an injury when you can prevent it.

I imagine that many supporting the SB237 adopt the motto of "live free or die" and I am here

tell you that death is not the worst thing that can happen to a person.

My patient back in Minnesota- he survived his crash, but he will never truly live, not in the way he used to. Now, he has this blank stare- one that every person on this panel can attest to -because he cannot comprehend the world around him.

His family members have to be with him around the clock to make sure he doesn't put himself in a dangerous situation. Those drivers on the road at the time of the crash, scarred by seeing a man that, for all they know, died right in front of them. These people, the ones who did not even get to make a choice, have to **live on** while the motorcyclist merely survives.

My patient's wife told me that he never wanted to wear a helmet while riding because he found comfort that if he were to get into a crash while on his bike, he would "simply" die. But death did not come so easy.

Many highway safety officials are working toward zero deaths and that is certainly a goal I support as well. But I urge you to join me and help the state go one step further: move Maryland towards zero injuries.

Research tells us that when states repeal their universal helmet law or opt for less restrictive requirements like Senate Bill 237 does, **helmet use will decrease and motorcycle-related deaths, injuries, and costs will increase.**

I 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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