

SUPPORT – SB566 – VEHICLE LAWS – REGISTRATION RENEWAL – INSPECTION REQUIREMENT

Good afternoon Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and committee members:

Thank you for taking the time to hear my testimony on this very important bill.

My name is Julie Drizin. I am 56 years old. I've been a resident of Silver Spring, Maryland for 25 years, and my two children have gone to Montgomery County Public Schools. This past summer, my daughters almost lost their mother and my husband almost lost his wife.

It was August 11, 2019. I was enjoying a Sunday morning bike ride with my sister when a 2000 Chevy Tahoe careened across two lanes, made an illegal left turn and slammed into me. I never saw it coming. My sister, who was 20 feet in front of me noticed an SUV driving erratically. She heard a crash, turned around didn't see me, then spotted my bike helmet in the grass. Fortunately, it was still on my head, but I was unconscious. My sister screamed for help. A runner passing by stopped and called 911. My sister told me that the SUV driver said, "Oh my God I'm so sorry, my brakes gave out on me. I was meaning to have them checked."

She could have killed me. I remember hearing sirens and getting hoisted onto a stretcher into an ambulance. I was in excruciating pain. I was taken to Suburban Hospital where doctors repaired a life-threatening internal bleed and stitched up a deep 9-inch laceration on my calf. An x-ray showed that I had bilateral pelvic fractures and a broken hip. Because I needed a higher level of medical care, I was transferred the next day to the University of Maryland Medical Center Shock and Trauma Unit in Baltimore. The surgeons there could not operate because the risk of deadly infection was too high. After 10 days in the ICU, I went to a Chevy Chase rehab facility for nearly a month, where I quickly learned how to transfer myself from bed to wheelchair without putting more than a few toes on the floor. I weaned myself off of oxycodone. I figured out how to diaper myself. I had kind and competent caregivers, but the entire experience in a nursing home was horrific – the food, the smells, the fluorescent lighting, the sleeplessness from blaring televisions and patients calling out for help.

When my orthopedist said I could start putting full weight on one leg, I was discharged. But I could not return home because I could not use stairs. So, I rented a one-story Airbnb where I lived alone for about six weeks, wheeling myself around and eventually, using a walker. My husband came once or twice a day to bring and prepare high protein food. My teenage daughter slept over once a week. And physical therapists and visiting nurses came every few days. By the end of October, the orthopedist gave me permission to put full weight on my other leg, and I could finally return home. We had to install extra railings so that I could safely and slowly navigate stairs, and hand-held shower heads so that I could bathe myself.

Still, walking was painful. Sitting was painful. Standing was painful. Lying down was painful. Trying to turn in bed was painful. Sometimes, it still is.

This "accident" disrupted my life. It stole precious time from my family and my work. It traumatized my sister and my children. I had to cancel a beach vacation and four work trips to conferences. I was dependent on other people to drive me to medical appointments and physical

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therapy, to help me get in and out of cars, to do my laundry. So far, I have personally spent over \$12,000 on health care, medical equipment and accommodations.

I know it could have been so much worse. I am alive. I am not paralyzed. I am not addicted to opioids. I have not lost income or my job. CareFirst Blue Cross has paid out about \$70,000 for my medical care. I am back at work and I still go to physical therapy twice a week.

Yet, I am dealing with the ramifications of this incident and probably will for some time. My hip is still broken. I have bumps and dark bruises and scars that hurt to the touch. I can't move my body in ways that used to be easy and natural; and I must be super careful to avoid bumping into things or falling. I can't stand for long periods of time. My ankles get swollen. My hips are different heights, so I have to wear a lift in one shoe. I have been told I will need a hip replacement in a few years. My memory isn't as sharp as it used to be. I have gone from being in the best physical fitness of my life to the worst. I am hypervigilant when driving or walking on sidewalks – fearful of cars around me, anxious when I see cyclists or pedestrians being anything but careful. I drive with one hand on the horn.

And I am angry at the state of Maryland for not protecting me. Perhaps if auto safety inspections required, this 20-year-old SUV's brakes would have been fixed before they failed. If I were hit by a state-owned vehicle, I'm sure you would recognize the state's responsibility for the accident. Even Uber and Lyft require their drivers' cars to pass an annual safety inspection.

You might say required auto safety inspections would be a burden on the poor, who are more likely to be driving older vehicles. But auto safety inspections actually protect the poor – the children whose minimum wage mom is driving them to day care, the under-employed father walking his children to school, the grandmother on a fixed income crossing the street. Safety inspections could prevent a poor driver or a poor pedestrian from becoming permanently disabled or having to declare bankruptcy.

Driving is a privilege, not a right. We required people to pass a driving test to get a driver's license. We do this to make sure they know how to drive safely. But a person's driving skills don't matter much if their two-ton vehicle is unsafe in ways that aren't visible to police.

I did not want to bankrupt the woman who hit me or her family. She was negligent and could have killed me or herself or many others. We were both lucky that didn't happen. But I hold the state of Maryland accountable. I **STRONGLY urge** you to pass this law requiring drivers of older cars to have regular safety inspections, as our wise neighboring states already do.

Thank you,

Julie Drizin, Constituent/Advocate