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February 13, 2020

The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr.
Chair, Judicial Proceedings Committee
Miller Senate Office Building, 2 East
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: **Senate Bill 819** – Distracted Driving Monitoring Systems – Authorization - **Support**

Dear Chairperson Smith and Members of the Committee:

I would like to express my support for this bill. It represents a significant step toward reducing a serious highway safety problem. Young drivers in particular are overrepresented in distracted driving automobile crashes. This is largely, but not exclusively, due to texting on a cell phone while driving.

Research that we have conducted at the University of Maryland has revealed that emerging adults have grown up with cell phones and related technology. As such, they feel very comfortable using them while multitasking such as operating a motor vehicle. They tend to feel (inappropriately) that they can drive and text safely and not cause a crash or near incident while driving and texting. Further, our research has shown that many young people who report texting while driving do not feel it is very likely that they will be caught or sanctioned by the police. They see this as largely an unenforceable behavior. This bill, if passed, would address this feeling of low perceived risk.

Research on a related issue, alcohol-impaired driving, has shown that when drivers perceive an increased risk of DUI detection, coupled with appropriate publicity campaigns to educate them about this enforcement, the rates of drinking and driving decrease. I see the measures proposed in this bill as similar to what has worked with DUI reduction.

Please contact me if you need any additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kenneth H. Beck".

Kenneth H. Beck, Ph.D.
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