

**Support Testimony of
Tara Reed Carlson, MS, RN
Center for Injury Prevention and Policy
R Adams Cowley Shock Trauma Center, University of Maryland
SB 819 Distracted Driving Monitoring Systems Authorization
Sponsor: Senator Klausmeier
February 27, 2020
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
William C. Smith, Jr.-Chair**

Good afternoon Senator Smith and Respected Committee Members. I am Tara Reed Carlson, Director of Community Outreach and External Affairs and Director of the Center for Injury Prevention and Policy at the R Adams Cowley Shock Trauma Center. I am before you today in support of SB 819 Distracted Driving Monitoring Systems Authorization. This bill would allow Maryland State Police and counties to establish a program to enforce distracted driving violations. The bill is not mandatory, it simply enables a county the option of implementing technology that would reduce distracted driving and motor vehicle crashes in Maryland.

As established by State law, the R Adams Cowley Shock Trauma Center is the core element of the State's Emergency Medical Services System and serves as the State's Primary Adult Resource Center (PARC) for the treatment of trauma. Specifically, the law mandates Shock Trauma to serve as (a) the State's primary adult trauma center, (b) the statewide referral center for the treatment of head, spinal and multiple trauma injuries, (c) the regional trauma center for Region III and the southwest quadrant of Baltimore City, and (d) the statewide referral center for patients in need of hyperbaric medical treatment.

In Fiscal Year 2019 we saw over 7000 patients and 36% (or over 2500) of those patients were due to motor vehicle or traffic related crashes. We no longer call them accidents because so many of them are preventable. One major cause of motor vehicle crashes is due to a distracted driver. And these crashes are preventable if only the driver had their attention on the task of driving instead of other distractions.

There are three main types of distraction: **visual**-taking your eyes off the road, **manual**-taking your hands off the wheel and **cognitive**-taking your mind off of what you are doing. Types of distracted driving include texting and using a hand held cell phone. Nearly one in three drivers report talking on their cell phones while driving fairly often or regularly. The National Safety Council estimates cell phone use while driving leads to 1.6 million crashes a year. Nearly 390,000 injuries occur each year from crashes caused by texting and driving. The NSC further reports that 1 out of every 4 car crashes in the US is caused by texting and driving. **And all of these are preventable.**

Additional statistics for you

- Texting takes a driver's eyes off the road for at least four to five seconds; long enough to travel the length of a football field at the speed of 55 mph. (CDC, 2018)
- In FY19, 43% of R Adams Cowley Shock Trauma Center admission were individuals between the ages of 15 and 35 (Shock Trauma Fact Sheet, 2019)



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- In FY19, R Adams Cowley Shock Trauma Center admitted 7,060 patients and 36% of those patients were from motor vehicle or traffic related crashes which translates to roughly 2,500 people. (Shock Trauma Fact Sheet, 2019)
- Distracted driving contributes to 58% of all crashes in Maryland(NHTSA, 2018)
- Texting while driving is categorized under three forms of distractions: visual, manual, and cognitive. (NHTSA, 2018)
- Visual distractions require the driver to remove focus from the road momentarily. Manual distractions require the driver to eliminate physical contact from the steering wheel. Cognitive distraction occurs when the driver has diverted their attention away from driving. (NHTSA, 2018)

For all of these reasons I urge your support for SB 819 and reduce the risk of distracted driving for your constituents and all Marylanders on the roads.

References

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Tara Carlson, MS, RN
Director, Community Outreach and External Affairs
Center for Injury Prevention and Policy
R Adams Cowley Shock Trauma Center, University of Maryland
tcarlson@umm.edu
410-328-7347