
March 4, 2020

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

RE: Letter of Support – Senate Bill 878 – Worcester County – Special Events Zones - Prohibitions

Dear Chairman Smith and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) supports Senate Bill 878 and offers the following information for the Committee’s consideration.

Senate Bill 878 defines and prohibits “exhibition driving” in “special event” zones in Worcester County. The bill expands the authorization for MDOT State Highway Administration (MDOT SHA), on its own initiative or at the request of a local authority, to designate an area on a State highway as a “special event” zone and reduce established speed limits in the special event zone. The change would be made after a determination that it is necessary to ensure public safety. Senate Bill 878 would grant the same authority to local jurisdictions in Worcester County on local highways.

MDOT SHA’s top priority is the safety of the over 6 million road users that travel on the approximately 17,000 lane miles that it operates and maintains. The “special events” defined in Senate Bill 878 often involve thousands of individuals converging on a condensed location, which can create dangerous situations for pedestrians and motorists alike.

Lowering the speed limits and prohibiting certain driving activities within special event zones will help prevent and mitigate the type of hazardous driving activities that have been responsible for numerous senseless deaths and injuries in Maryland. In 2008, an accident that occurred during a drag race event on Route 210 in Prince George’s County killed eight bystanders and injured numerous others. It was reported that the vehicle that struck and killed the bystanders was traveling at approximately 110 miles per hour. In June 2009, a drag race accident claimed two lives and seriously injured two others on I-70 in Woodlawn. More recently, in July 2019, during an unsanctioned car event in Ocean City, two individuals, including a juvenile, were struck after a driver lost control of his vehicle while attempting to do a burnout maneuver on a crowded street. By classifying events such as these, as well as the surrounding areas, as “special event zones,” participants would be subject to stricter penalties for a wide range of dangerous driving activities. MDOT supports Senate Bill 878 and believes that its enactment will prevent serious situations and tragedies like those described above.

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The Maryland Department of Transportation respectfully requests the Committee grant Senate Bill 878 a favorable report.

Sincerely,

Gregory Slater
Secretary
Maryland Department of Transportation
410-865-1000