



7338 Baltimore Ave
Suite 102
College Park, MD 20740

Committee: Environment and Transportation

Testimony on: HB494 - “Vehicle Laws –Reckless Driving – Excessive Speeding”

Position: Support

Hearing Date: February 4, 2021

The Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club supports HB494, which would establish that a person who drives at a speed of 20 miles per hour or more in excess of the maximum speed limit is guilty of reckless driving.

Transportation is now the primary contributor to greenhouse gas emissions in our state. Tailpipe emissions from cars and trucks are also a major source of health-damaging air pollution. This means there is growing need to get individuals out of their cars, taking transit, riding bikes and walking more. However, it’s quite difficult to make this happen near roads where drivers may be speeding, particularly if they are greatly exceeding the maximum speed limit.

We live in a car-centric culture where transportation planning, road infrastructure and vehicle laws are largely focused on enabling vehicles to get to their destination as swiftly as possible. Unfortunately, this has resulted in some drivers feeling they have priority on the road, and there are high rates of injury and death for bicyclists and pedestrians as well as vehicle drivers and passengers. Research shows that a vehicle’s rate of speed has a direct impact on the ability to see ahead and notice people in or near the roadway, how quickly one can respond to avoid potential problems, how long it takes to stop a vehicle, and how likely someone will die as a result of a car accident. Clearly, there is an understandable need to control speeding on our roads, and limiting excessive speeding is even more important

This bill could help bring about needed change. Any person convicted of reckless driving would have to appear in court, may not prepay the fine, and if convicted, is subject to a fine not exceeding \$1,000. These tougher penalties would help discourage excessive speeding and make our roads safer for everyone, especially bikers and pedestrians.

In summary, this bill would address a significant problem with our motor vehicle laws, and we urge the Committee to issue a favorable report on it.

Brian Ditzler
Transportation Committee Chair
Brian.Ditzler@MDSierra.org

Josh Tulkin
Chapter Director
Josh.Tulkin@MDSierra.org

Founded in 1892, the Sierra Club is America’s oldest and largest grassroots environmental organization. The Maryland Chapter has over 75,000 members and supporters, and the Sierra Club nationwide has over 800,000 members and nearly four million supporters.