



MARYLAND COALITION FOR HIGHWAY SAFETY

HB 0178/SB SB0337 - SUPPORT

January 19, 2021

John J. Seng

Director

Maryland Coalition For Highway Safety

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Re:

SUPPORT HB 0178 "Vehicle Laws - Reckless Driving, Speed Contests, Registration Plates, and Noise Abatement – Penalties" House Committee: Environment and Transportation Committee, Hearing Date: 21 January 2021

Cross-filed with SB0337 "Vehicle Laws – Reckless Driving Excessive Speed" Senate Committee: Judicial Proceedings Committee, Hearing Date: 27 January 2021

Dear Chairman Kumar Barve and Members of the Maryland House of Delegates Environment and Transportation Committee:

My name is John Seng, volunteer director and founder of the Maryland Coalition For Highway Safety. Our 125-member organization supports all provisions in HB 0178, cross-filed with SB 0337.

Our founding organizations include the American Automobile Association (AAA) Mid-Atlantic, the Greater Olney Civic Association, The Tantallon Citizens Association in Prince George's County and a group of Maryland home owner associations.

The Problem

We are, quite frankly, fed up with excessive, dangerous speeding on Maryland highways and other roads. Too many people die on Maryland roads. We are bombarded by excruciatingly loud vehicles of all kinds throughout the day and night.

- **“Maryland has averaged more than 500 traffic fatalities annually over the past five years, and despite reduced traffic volumes during the past six months due to the COVID-19 emergency, fatalities on our roadways have increased compared to 2019.”** (source: Chrissy Nizer, Administrator, MD MVA)
- **Maryland suffered 568 road deaths in 2020, compared to 535 in 2019, over fewer miles driven.** 2020 fatalities increased 6%, crashes increased 9% compared to 2019. (Maryland Highway Safety Office)

Current Maryland transportation laws are too weak, and don't work well to deter speeding, reckless driving and other illegal behaviors. That's what *The Maryland Coalition For Highway Safety* has learned in working with elected officials and highway safety experts. Extreme sporting seems on a dangerous rise on many major and local roads through our communities and near our homes. Too often, speeds exceed 100mph with jet aircraft decibel noise. And across the board, average speeds by drivers creep up, creating safety hazards that risk lives or serious injuries to innocent parties. Often, alcohol and other abused substances further cloud vehicle operator judgment.

Taking Positive Steps

The Coalition has adopted a multi-faceted approach to propose methods to deter excessive, dangerous speed and noise. There is no one size fits all solution. But we must start with much stronger deterrents to violating Maryland road laws.

Putting more teeth into current laws offers a central step in the right direction. The passage of HB 0178 in conjunction with SB 0337 presents real potential to save lives in Maryland.

In particular, we must emphasize that the mandatory court appearance provision in both the House and Senate bills adds a significant, crucial deterrence for individuals who would otherwise still pay even higher penalties but continue their disregard for public safety and wellbeing. We don't deny that Maryland courts are currently overwhelmed, but believe that the medicine is worth the cure. Other remedies should exist to address congestion in the legal system, while the specter of a court appearance will hang over the heads of drivers who simply pay their fines but selfishly continue their lack respect for road safety and your constituents.

We thank you and the Committee for your review of our concerns. We urge you to submit a favorable report on HB 0178.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John J. Seng". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "John" being the most prominent part.

John J. Seng
Director