



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES

ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

February 25, 2021

Testimony in SUPPORT of HB 1082 - Vehicle Laws – Enforcement and Use of Real-Time Digital Spotters

Summary: HB 1082 would permit state and local governments to use real time digital spotters, which are cameras trained to zero in and identify a distracted driving violation, to better enforce distracted driving laws.

Overview: Distracted driving is a deadly problem in Maryland; it contributes to 58% of all crashes in Maryland. On average, more than 180 people die every year in Maryland from distracted driving crashes, and more than 27,000 more are injured.

Studies show that when an officer issues a citation, the driver is 4 to 5 times more likely to change their behavior (e.g. no longer texting while driving), resulting in safer roads.

Despite robust state and local public awareness campaigns, distracted driving is nearly impossible to enforce. Phone use from a distance is hard to spot, and by the time an offender is pulled over, there can be no evidence of the violation because they have put down their phone.

These digital spotters are programmed to spot distracted driving violations and photograph them. The image is then forwarded to law enforcement only if a distracted driving violation is detected. If law enforcement issues a citation, the image is linked to the citation.

The images are low-resolution, physically housed inside the unit until they need to be uploaded as evidence, and purged from the system once they are uploaded.

HB 1082 has numerous safeguards to reduce opportunities for racial profiling, discrimination, or disproportionate harm. The bill:

- Requires racial equity studies before any technology can be deployed
- Requires law enforcement to undergo racial equity training for traffic enforcement
- Requires departments to report back to SHA demographic data so the General Assembly can monitor how any technology is being used and identify concerns about racial injustice
- Reduces the fines associated with distracted driving

Conclusion: With real time digital spotters, we can help put an end to the unnecessary accidents

and deaths caused by distracted driving. These deaths are entirely preventable and digital spotters will enable fair enforcement that incentivizes drivers to change their behavior and results in safer roads for all.

Thank you and I ask for a favorable report on HB 1082.