



ABATE OF MARYLAND, INC.

Dedicated to the Freedom of the Road and Responsible Motorcycle Legislation

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr. Chairman and Members of the
Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Robert Spanburgh, Jr., Chairman of the Board, Abate of Maryland, Inc.

DATE: February 18, 2021

RE: **SB712 – Vehicle Laws – Protective Headgear Requirement
for Motorcycle Riders – Exception**

POSITION: **FAVORABLE**

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee,

My name is Robert Spanburgh Jr. I am the Chairman of the Board of ABATE of Md. We are the State's largest Motorcycle Rights Organization. Since 1974 we have lobbied for a safer, more enjoyable, and more fulfilling riding experience for all of Maryland's motorcyclists.

I obtained my motorcycle endorsement on my driver's license in 1983 and I joined ABATE in 1985. As a result of my membership, I registered to vote and became more civically involved in state and local government matters. When I first started riding "on the street" Maryland enjoyed "Freedom of Choice" when it came to the matter of motorcycle helmet usage. I enjoyed that right until 1992 when our ability to choose was rescinded under false pretenses.

The State Legislature was led to believe that Federal Highway Funds would be withheld unless state-mandated helmet usage was instituted. That turned out to not be the case. 32 US states still do not mandate helmet usage for adult riders. As other members of our panel will show you today, there is no significant difference in the number or severity of motorcycle accidents between so-called "free states" and helmet-mandated states.

As a motorcyclist with 38 years of experience, I exercise my freedom of choice when I am riding in free states. I will wear a helmet in certain circumstances as the need arises. I do not and have never discouraged helmet usage. Many of my friends wear them at all times. The overwhelming majority of my friends and fellow ABATE members wish to see a return to the time when responsible adult riders are able to make that choice for themselves. It is with this in mind that I respectfully request a favorable report and Committee vote on SB 712. Thank You for your time.