



# ABATE OF MARYLAND, INC.

*Dedicated to the Freedom of the Road and Responsible Motorcycle Legislation*

February 18, 2021

The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr., Chairman  
Judicial Proceedings Committee

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

As a registered voter, concerned citizen of District 27B, and member of Abate of Maryland, I write to you to urge a favorable report for SB712- the helmet modification bill.

I am a 50-year-old legal assistant, wife, and mother who has been a proud member of the motorcycling community for about 12 years and an Abate of Maryland member for 5 years. I have lived in Maryland all my life.

The motorcycle culture is made up of many people who, like me, are responsible citizens pursuing their hobby. We plan our weekends and vacations around motorcycling. Until Covid, we would customarily take a few motorcycle trips each year. With our riding buddies, my husband and I have traveled up and down the entire East Coast and to other nearby states within a thousand-mile radius of our home.

We have been to several states that do not impose the helmet requirement. Sometimes we enjoy the freedom of not wearing a helmet and other times we keep our helmets on—it depends on factors such as weather, traffic, speed, and road conditions. The point is that riders are in the best position to make this determination and should have the ability to make the decision.

Opponents of allowing helmet choice say that because of the risk involved in riding a motorcycle, it is for our own safety that we should be required to wear a helmet. But I can think of other recreational activities available in Maryland—many of which include some risk of harm or death to the participant—that do not have a helmet requirement.

- Bicyclists are free to travel on or along the same roadways as motorcyclists and have the same risk of injury or death if involved in an accident with a motor vehicle, yet bicyclists over the age of 16 can decide for themselves if they want to wear a helmet.
- The use of safety helmets would certainly decrease the severity of head injuries or death for snowboarders and skiers who collide with other people, trees, rocks, etc. yet, again, there is no helmet requirement.

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- Rock climbers who fall may suffer serious life-threatening and/or permanent injuries yet they can decide for themselves if they want to wear a helmet.

Furthermore, many recreational water activities pose a risk of injury or death, yet the government has not imposed mandatory use of safety equipment to the same degree as they have with motorcyclists. Of the many thousands of Marylanders who enjoy our waterways, only jet ski operators and riders and children are actually required to wear a personal floatation device while on board a personal watercraft or vessel, as opposed to only to have a personal floatation device *available*.

If bicyclists, skiers, snowboarders, rock climbers, kayakers, sailors, etc. are capable of making decisions regarding their personal safety while pursuing their recreational activities surely motorcycle riders are also capable. I urge you to please correct this oversight that has existed for many years. Let those who ride, decide!

Please give a favorable report to SB712.

Lee A. Sawyer  
Huntingtown, MD