



# ABATE OF MARYLAND, INC.

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

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## **Testimony in Favor of Senate Bill 712-Vehicle Laws - Protective Headgear Requirement for Motorcycle Riders - Exception**

To the Honorable William C. Smith, Jr. and Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee:

The state of Maryland, like every other state, has suffered financially during the pandemic that has consumed our country during the past year. If there is a resource which Maryland could easily access to recoup some of the millions of dollars that it has lost wouldn't it benefit the state to access this resource? I believe it would but there is currently a hindrance to taking advantage of this resource.

This resource is motorcycle tourism. The problem with accessing this revenue is Maryland's current mandatory helmet law. A large percentage of motorcyclists will leave, pass through, or not visit a mandatory helmet state and take their tourism dollars with them to helmet choice states.

To see evidence how strongly motorcyclists feel about this issue one only needs to go to the border between Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Delaware, on any nice riding weekend and see the flow of tourism dollars heading out of Maryland as compared to the little flowing into the state. Non-riders may not believe that people from Virginia and West Virginia will ride straight through Maryland to get to a helmet choice state, where they spend their tourism dollars, but they do. I live one mile from the Mason-Dixon Line and can attest to the fact that many riders leave or do not enter Maryland for rides not only by observation but practice as well.

As a rider with over 40 years' experience, I remember the days when Maryland was helmet choice and the surrounding states were not and how riders would inundate Maryland businesses, especially near the border, and spend their tourism dollars. That ended with the stroke of a pen when Maryland reinstated the mandatory helmet law. Without helmet choice riders no longer had a strong desire to go to Maryland. Then in 2003, again with the stroke of a pen, the flow reversed when Pennsylvania passed helmet choice. Now Pennsylvania businesses delight in Maryland riders heading north with their money.



Wouldn't you like to see Maryland dollars stay in Maryland? Wouldn't it be nice to see riders from other states come into Maryland to spend money instead of stopping at the border or just passing through? This is not a small amount of money but a sizable amount. Consider if on a nice day several thousand riders entered Maryland, and more Maryland riders just stayed in Maryland, and spent even \$50 each, both of which are probably low estimates, how much it would mean to local businesses and the state tax coffers as well. Multiply this by the number of days riders are on the road and you should easily see the amount climb into the millions of dollars.

Enactment of helmet choice for motorcyclists would not only give motorcyclists the freedom they deserve but would help local businesses and the state of Maryland as well.

Please support SB 712.

Respectfully,

Steven P. Strohmier