

# MARYLAND COALITION FOR HIGHWAY SAFETY

**Testimony to Maryland Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee** 

**SB 0337 - SUPPORT** 

CROSSFILED WITH HB 0494/HB 0178 - SUPPORT

January 27, 2021

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<a href="https://www.facebook.com/groups/marylandcoalitionhighwaysafety">https://www.facebook.com/groups/marylandcoalitionhighwaysafety</a>

Re: Please SUPPORT SB 0337 "Vehicle Laws - Reckless Driving - Excessive Speeding" Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee, Hearing Date: 27 January 2021

Dear Chairman William C. Smith, Jr. and Members of the Maryland Senate Judicial Proceedings 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 SB 0337, sponsored by Senator Ben Kramer, and crossfiled with HB 0178/HB 0494.

The Maryland Coalition For Highway Safety's 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**

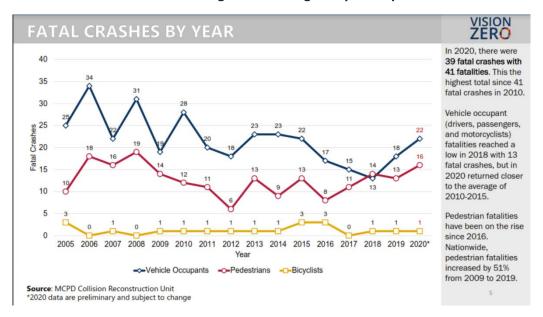
We are, quite frankly, fed up with excessive, dangerous speeding on Maryland highways and other roads. Many people continue to die on Maryland roads, and the fatality statistics are heading in the wrong direction. We are bombarded by excruciatingly loud vehicles of all kinds throughout the day and night that we associate with excessive speed and reckless driving.

- "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)

Montgomery County Fatalities Increased 34% in 2020 Over Previous 4-Year Average.

#### VISION PRELIMINARY 2020 CRASH TOTALS ZERO With the pandemic reducing **ALL CRASHES** 2016 - 2019 the number of vehicles on the 2019 % Change road, the overall number of Prelim. Avg. crashes in 2020 dropped by Cyclists 133 +8% 120 144 a third compared to the prior 4-year average. Collisions 11,315 Drivers / Passengers -34% 11,042 7,524 between motor vehicles and **Pedestrians** 485 -26% 500 357 people on bikes saw a slight increase. TOTAL 11,933 -33% 11,662 8.02 For those still on the road and involved in a crash, there was **FATAL CRASHES** 2016 - 2019 a notable increase in 2020 2019 % Change speeding, impaired, and Prelim. Avg. unbuckled drivers. The Cyclists increase in risky behavior was N/A observed nationwide. As a Drivers / Passengers 22 18 16 +38% result, fatalities were up 34% **Pedestrians** in Montgomery County 13 12 16 +33% compared to the prior 4-year TOTAL 32 29 +34% average and projected to increase nationwide in 2020. NOTES: Red Text = The number is preliminary and subject to change. 2020 cases are still being closed out. Includes reports from MCPD, RCPD, GCPD, M-NCPPC Police, and TPPD. % change = change from 2020 compared to the 2016-2019 average.

Road Fatalities Hit A 10-Year High Total Montgomery County.



Current Maryland transportation laws are too weak, and fail 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 Maryland 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.

## Make Speeders Tell It To The Judge

In particular, we must emphasize that the mandatory court appearance provision in both the Senate and House bills adds a significant, critical deterrence for individuals who could otherwise still easily, instantly pay even higher penalties, but continue to speed in total disregard for public safety and wellbeing. We don't deny that Maryland courts are currently overwhelmed, but believe that the wheels of justice turning at any speed is worth the benefit. Decision-makers should seek other remedies to aleve congestion in the legal system. In the meantime, let the specter of a court appearance hang over the heads of drivers who simply pay their fines but selfishly continue their lack of respect for road safety and your constituents.

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

We thank you and the Committee for your review of our concerns. We urge you to submit a favorable report on SB 0337.

Sincerely,

John J. Seng

Director