



Statement of Maryland Rural Health Association

To the Judicial Proceedings Committee

February 23, 2021

Senate Bill 712 Vehicle Laws - Protective Headgear Requirement for Motorcycle Riders - Exception

LETTER OF CONCERN

Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, Senator Hough, and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee, the Maryland Rural Health Association (MRHA) appreciates the opportunity to comment on Senate Bill 712 Vehicle Laws - Protective Headgear Requirement for Motorcycle Riders - Exception.

This legislation allows for changes to Maryland's universal motorcycle helmet law and authorizes an individual at least 21 years old who has been licensed to operate a motorcycle for at least 2 years, has completed a motorcycle safety course, or is a passenger on a motorcycle operated by a driver who meets the above criteria.

MRHA is concerned that this law would put many rural Marylanders and beyond at risk for severe head injury and death. Motorcycle accidents can still occur, even involving those most experienced at driving motorcycles. Easing these safety standards would unnecessarily put citizens and operators at risk, increasing the strain on hospital emergency departments (EDs) in rural areas where trauma care is already in short supply, and increasing strain on other clinical sites in rural Maryland where trained medical staff is limited. The long-term traumatic effects of motorcycle accidents not only affect those involved but have dire implications on rural medical triage systems.

MRHA's mission is to educate and advocate for the optimal health and wellness of rural communities and their residents. Membership is comprised of health departments, hospitals, community health centers, health professionals, and community members in rural Maryland.

Rural Maryland represents almost 80 percent of Maryland's land area and 25% of its population. Of Maryland's 24 counties, 18 are considered rural by the state, and with a population of over 1.6 million they differ greatly from the urban areas in the state.

MRHA thus urges an unfavorable report on SB712, and thanks the committee for its consideration.

Lara Wilson, Executive Director, larawilson@mdruralhealth.org, 410-693-6988