

**SB0337 “Vehicle Laws – Reckless Driving Excessive Speed” Senate Committee: Judicial Proceedings Committee, Hearing Date, 27 January 2021**

**Position: Support SB0337**

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Re:

**Support - SB0337 “Vehicle Laws – Reckless Driving Excessive Speed”**

**Cross-Filed with HB 0178 – “Reckless Driving, Speed Contests, Registration Plates, and Noise Abatement Penalties:” House Committee: Environment and Transportation Committee**

**Dear Honorable Chairman William C. Smith Jr. and Members of the Maryland Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee**

**My name is Kenniss Henry and I am the Mother of Natasha Pettigrew, who in the fall of 2010 when was tragically killed by a drunk driver. I rise in support of SB0337 and its companion HB 0178.**

**The Problem**

**Ten years ago, I stood before this very committee pleading for stronger vehicular manslaughter laws. Laws that would send a clear message to potential perpetrators however it is evident that even stronger legislation must be passed into law. Ten years and I am still grieving because a drunk driver felt entitled to abuse the resources of the road and further, deemed that there should be no penalties for her reckless driving and the reckless endangerment of lives. Sadly, the statistics have not improved drastically as is evident by the following:**

- **“Maryland has averaged more than 500 traffic fatalities annually over the past five years, despite, reduced traffic volume for the past near year. (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% and crashes increased 9% compared to 2019. (Maryland Highway Safety Office)**
- **Prince George County suffered 470 deaths during the five-year period of 2014 – 2018. (Source: Maryland Highway Safety Office and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration)**

**Current Maryland transportation laws require commitments for additional overhauls, strengthening and enforcement. Commitments that are two-prongs as greater support and revenues must be allocated for public awareness and education. On a personal note, imagine that you just hugged and kissed your child and 2 hours later you are racing up a hospital corridor only to learn that your child will die before sunset or forever be a human vegetable. One so full of life, how could this be**

**happening. Imagine my horror when I discovered the driver could get a \$100 fine and a couple of points yet she hit and left the scene, drove 4.5 miles to her house, dragging my daughter's bicycle all the way. My journey not just mine but all those who walk in my shoes because of the sense of entitlement that far too many motorists possess when they get behind the wheel.**

**Next Steps –**

- 1. Advocate for the implementation of stronger legislation signed into law.**
- 2. Enforce the laws on the books.**
- 3. Ensure that staff and employees get adequate training. Use them as ambassadors for your messages.**
- 4. Commit to rolling out public awareness campaigns and education to include high school driver education.**
- 5. Make the penalties for failure to comply more severe, ie., failure to show for court appearance comes with 250 hours of mandatory community service, failure to complete community service will result in 10 days in jail. For second occurrence, the 250 community service hours will be 500 added onto the outstanding hours from the prior incident and if not met then 30 days in jail. Certainly, I recognize that any such recommendations must be legislated however the intent is introduce penalties that make the perpetrator want to appear in court.**

**Thank you for this opportunity to speak before this body...**

**Respectfully Submitted,**

**Kenniss Henry**