



**Statement of the National Safety Council
Senate Committee on Judicial Proceedings
Testimony Opposing SB 712
February 19, 2021**

The National Safety Council (NSC) respectfully asks you to oppose SB 712, which would repeal Maryland's universal motorcycle helmet law. NSC is America's leading nonprofit safety advocate and has been for over 100 years. As a mission-based organization, we work to eliminate the leading causes of preventable death and injury, focusing our efforts on the workplace, roadway and impairment. We create a culture of safety to keep people safer in the workplace and beyond so they can live their fullest lives. Our more than 15,000 member companies include several federal agencies and represent 7 million employees at nearly 50,000 U.S. worksites, including nearly 600 worksites in Maryland.

In 2019, there were 521 motor vehicle-related fatalities on Maryland's roadways.¹ Preliminary estimates by NSC show there likely will be a significant increase across the U.S. in motor vehicle-related fatalities in 2020 despite decreased traffic due to lockdowns earlier in the year.² Data shows that nationally, motorcycle riders and passengers make up a disproportionate percentage of these deaths.³ Although motorcycles only represent 3% of all registered vehicles, they accounted for 14% of all traffic fatalities and 17% of all occupant fatalities in 2018.⁴ Also in 2018, 4,985 motorcyclists and passengers died in crashes, and 37% of these individuals were not wearing a helmet at the time of the crash.⁵

A helmet is the most important piece of motorcycle safety equipment. Helmets are estimated to be 37% effective in preventing fatal injuries to motorcycle operators and 41% effective for motorcycle passengers.⁶ Unhelmeted riders are three times more likely than helmeted ones to sustain traumatic brain injuries in the event of a crash.⁷ The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) reported that since 2002, more than 25,000 lives have been saved thanks to motorcycle helmets.⁸ In addition, unhelmeted riders have higher health care costs as a result of their crash injuries. A 2002 review of 25 studies of the costs of injuries from motorcycle crashes reported that helmet use reduced the cost of medical treatment, length of hospital stay, and probability of long-term disability for riders injured in a crash.⁹

All-rider motorcycle helmet laws save lives, prevent lifelong brain injuries, and reduce associated crash costs; in other words, these laws are effective. In states with universal helmet laws, approximately 90% of motorcyclists observed were wearing helmets.¹⁰ In states without such laws, helmet use was observed to be at 55%.¹¹ Please protect Maryland's universal motorcycle helmet law and oppose SB 712. If you have any questions, please contact Tara Leystra Ackerman at tara.leystra@nsc.org or 202-445-3121.

¹ <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813060>

² <https://injuryfacts.nsc.org/motor-vehicle/overview/preliminary-monthly-estimates/>

³ <https://injuryfacts.nsc.org/motor-vehicle/road-users/motorcycles/>

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ <https://injuryfacts.nsc.org/motor-vehicle/occupant-protection/motorcycle-helmets/>

⁷ <https://www.nhtsa.gov/sites/nhtsa.dot.gov/files/810887.pdf>

⁸ <https://injuryfacts.nsc.org/motor-vehicle/occupant-protection/motorcycle-helmets/>

⁹ Lawrence, B.A.; Max, W.; and Miller, T.R. 2002. Cost of injuries resulting from motorcycle crashes: a literature review. Report no. DOT HS-809-242. Washington, DC: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

¹⁰ <https://www.cdc.gov/motorvehiclesafety/calculator/factsheet/mchelmet.html>

¹¹ Ibid.