



**AAA Mid-Atlantic's Testimony in Opposition**  
**SB 712 - Vehicle Laws - Protective Headgear Requirement for Motorcycle Riders - Exception**  
**Sponsors: Senator Hough et al**  
**Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee**  
**Tuesday, February 23, 2021**

- AAA Mid-Atlantic **opposes SB 712**, which exempts an individual who is 21 years of age or older from wearing protective headgear, or a helmet, while operating or riding a motorcycle if the individual:
  - has been licensed to operate a motorcycle for at least two years;
  - has completed an approved motorcycle rider safety course; or
  - is a passenger on a motorcycle operated by a rider who meets these criteria from the requirement to wear specified protective headgear while operating or riding on a motorcycle.
- According to the Maryland Institute for Emergency Medical Services Systems (MIEMSS), Maryland's trauma centers treated 904 patients involved in motorcycle crashes during Fiscal Year 2019. Ninety percent of these patients (812) were age 21 or older, and 28.4% of them (231) sustained a head injury, 26 of whom subsequently died. Of the 231 riders who sustained head injuries, 26% were not wearing a helmet.
- In 2019, 77 people died in motorcycle-involved crashes while 1,058 were injured, according to data from the Maryland Highway Safety Office. Statewide, there were 74 fatal crashes, 897 injury crashes, and 281 property damage crashes totaling 1,252 crashes in 2019.
- While the number (4,985) of motorcyclists killed in crashes decreased nationally by nearly five percent in 2018, motorcyclists are still overrepresented in traffic fatalities, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA).
- AAA and traffic safety advocates across the country want to decrease the number of motorcycle-related injuries, and further reduce motorcyclist fatalities by supporting and strengthening laws that require helmet use, not repealing existing laws.
- Wearing a helmet is required in more than 18 states and the District of Columbia while an additional 29 states have laws covering some riders, usually people under 18 years of age, according to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety.
- Serious head injury is common among fatally injured motorcyclists making helmet use essential.
- The use of protective headgear saves lives. NHTSA estimates that nationwide helmets saved the lives of 1,872 motorcyclists in 2017 and that an additional 749 lives could have been saved if all motorcyclists had worn helmets.
- AAA **opposes** any legislation that will weaken existing traffic safety laws and put motorcyclists, bicyclists, motorists or pedestrians at a greater risk of injury or a traffic fatality; therefore, we oppose **SB 712** and respectfully urge the Committee to render an **unfavorable** report.

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