



# ABATE OF MARYLAND, INC.

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*Dedicated to the Freedom of the Road and Responsible Motorcycle Legislation*

## MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr. Chairman and Members of the  
Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Executive Director, Kenneth V. Sawyer, Abate of Maryland, Inc.

DATE: January 24, 2021

RE: **SB495 – Reckless and Negligent Driving – Death of Another  
– Must-Appear Violation (Sherry’s and Ryan’s Law)**

POSITION: **FAVORABLE**

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As the voice of motorcyclists throughout the state, Abate of Maryland is in favor of SB495. We have supported this bill and provided testimony for many years.

The proposed bill seeks to modify the current law to include that a person charged with reckless and negligent driving that contributes to an accident that results in the death of another person must appear in Court and may not prepay the fine.

We believe that requiring reckless motor vehicle operators who cause the death of another person to appear in court would hold persons accountable for their actions. This could be helpful in the healing process for the family members who are grieving the tragic loss of their loved one.

A mandatory court appearance is a very small price to pay for a person who causes the death of another through their reckless and negligent conduct. The inconvenience (and potential lost income) of missing employment to attend court, the probable expense of hiring a lawyer, and the discomfort of having to defend or answer for their actions in a court of law would likely deter many motorists who have yet to understand that this kind of driving presents a danger to all that travel the roads.

This bill has been presented to the committee several times. Unfortunately, as the years pass and despite safety campaigns to address dangerous driving, our roads are not becoming safer. In an open letter to drivers last year the National Highway Traffic and Safety Administration reported that even though fewer Americans drove due to the pandemic, those who did took more risks and had more fatal crashes. Our members, who traveled over a combined 250,000 miles last year, have observed first-hand the increase in more aggressive and dangerous driving.

There has been very moving testimony presented over the years from many family members of people who were killed because of the way another person operated their motor vehicle. These family members favor this bill so strongly that, each year, they steel themselves for the pain that they are forced to relive as they recount the tragic loss of their loved one. Abate of Maryland feels very strongly that this bill should be approved and implemented as soon as possible so that our roadways are safer for everyone.

We request a favorable report of SB495.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kenneth V. Sawyer". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Kenneth V. Sawyer, Executive Director  
Abate of Maryland, Inc.