

Sb297 Testimony.pdf

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Position: FAV

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Finance Committee

Joint Committees

Children, Youth, and Families

Ending Homelessness

Fair Practices and State Personnel Oversight

Management of Public Funds

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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony of Senator Joanne C. Benson
SB 297 Vehicle Laws- Speed Restrictions- Expressway and Interstate Highways

Good afternoon Chair Smith and esteemed members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee Senate Bill 297 seeks to create consistency in speed limits amongst Maryland Expressways and Interstate Highways. In its present posture, any individual travelling (Interstate 70) from Frederick to Hagerstown is lawfully authorized to travel at the speed of 70 miles per hour. Upon passing through Hagerstown, any individual travelling onto Interstate 270 is now required to decelerate their vehicle to the speed of 65 miles per hour. Once again, an abrupt change in speed is introduced when individuals travelling onto to Interstate 495 must again abruptly decelerate their vehicle to 55 miles per hour. Further complicating matters, adequate signage is not placed notifying travelers of the adjustment. Not only does this pose the threat of increased traffic on our interstates, but it places our drivers at risk of receiving innumerable amounts of speeding citations.

This bill would require the State Highway Administration to post notice of the maximum speed limit for an expressway at no greater than 5-mile intervals. This would consequently result in consistency in interstate highway speed.

In addition, I am also introducing an amendment to this current bill which will change the speed limit on Interstate 270 & 495 to 70 miles per hour.

Our approach to Senate Bill 297 is 2 pronged in the fact that it will seek to eliminate ongoing problems with:

- Interstate Highway Congestion
- Interstate accidents due to abrupt changes in highway speed

As to be expected, opposition to such a proposal is that this might present the argument that an increase in speed will place drivers at a greater risk. However, I have witnessed through my own personal experiences that any driver operating their vehicle at the posted speed, faces the risk of being run off the road due to those who may be operating their vehicle based on the posted speed on another interstate.

Thus, I respectfully urge the committee for favorable report on Senate Bill 297.

SB0297 - SHA - Speed Restrictions - Expressways an

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Position: INFO

January 27, 2021

The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr.
Chairman, Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis MD 21401

***Re: Letter of Information – Senate Bill 297 – Vehicle Laws – Speed Restrictions –
Expressways and Interstate Highways***

Dear Chairman Smith and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) takes no position on Senate Bill 297 but offers the following information for consideration by the Committee during its deliberations.

Safety is MDOT's top priority. Speed limits on Maryland's roadway are set through careful application of traffic engineering practices. One key to reducing speed-related crashes is to minimize "speed differential," the difference in speed between vehicles on the roadway, which often contributes to crashes. Therefore, transportation professionals set speeds that effectively balance the design of a roadway with driver expectation.

Speed studies establish, validate, or revise speed limits on portions of roadways in part by finding the 85th percentile speed – the speed that most motorists on that section of roadway consider safe and reasonable under typical conditions. In addition, speed studies examine roadway characteristics, crash history, and unusual conditions along the road, such as roadway construction.

Setting speed limits involves a strong consideration of roadway design and driver expectations. Mandating speed limits on certain interstates and expressways removes the speed study and judgement required for speed limits to be reasonably determined as roadway conditions change. If speed limits are arbitrarily set, a change could increase speed differentials of motorists as some obey the posted speed limit, while others will fail to comply out of habit or believing that the limit is unreasonably low for the roadway geometry.

The Maryland Department of Transportation respectfully requests the Committee consider this information when deliberating Senate Bill 297.

Respectfully Submitted,

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