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Health and Government
Operations Committee

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Public Health and Minority
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The Maryland House of Delegates

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HB 668

Reckless and Negligent Driving - Death of Another - Must-Appear Violation

Members of the of the House Judiciary Committee, I come before you today to present House Bill 668 and ask for you to give it a favorable report. This bill may only add two sentences to Maryland law, but those two sentences would carry a lot of weight for families looking for closure following a tragic death. Under current law, an individual who kills a person due to reckless or negligent driving may pre-pay the fine and avoid a court appearance altogether.

Although additional strain on the judicial system should be considered for any mandate such as the one proposed in this bill, it is a non-factor in this instance. In a given year, the amount of reckless and negligent driving charges that are associated with a death is only in the double digits. This is an easy way to hold offenders accountable for the life that they ended without damaging our court system. HB 668 will require that offenders appear in court for crimes of a life-or-death nature, which is the least we can do for families facing the tremendous sense of loss felt from the death of a loved one.

In reckless and negligent driving cases, offenders are mandated to show up under circumstances that are much less serious. Throwing objects at a vehicle and failure to report an accident to police both require the offender to appear in court. Why would we require less for a driver that killed someone else due to their actions?

When this bill was previously considered, numerous families and community members came to testify regarding their desire for this bill to be passed, as they felt as though the current law did not assign the proper value to their loved ones' death. Since then reckless and negligent drivers have continued to avoid the consequences of their life-threatening actions and countless more families have found that they lack the ability to address the individual who killed their loved one in court.

These lives lost may be a motorcyclist, bicyclist, pedestrian, or another motorist. Their families may or may not want to see the person responsible for the death of their loved one. HB 668 will make sure the person who took a life appears in court.

Certainly, the value of life in our state should be treated under different circumstances than the process used to pay a parking ticket. The tragedy of a lost life is worth more than a check in the mail and by giving this bill a favorable report, you are giving families a chance to receive closure or find some healing.

Vote in FAVOR of HB 668