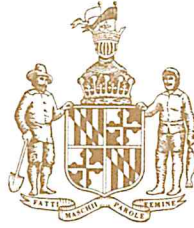


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January 18, 2022

SB087 - SUPPORT

Vehicle Laws - Intersections - Prohibited Acts

Dear Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee,

SB087 seeks to provide a solution to a chronic, persistent and growing commuter gridlock taking place every week day with negative impact on our communities by prolonging morning and afternoon rush hours, wasted fuel, increased air pollution, and endangering pedestrians and non-vehicle commuters.

Under current law, if an intersection is posted with “Do Not Block The Intersection” signs motorists are held harmless for blocking an intersection as long as they entered it before the light turned red. Thereby leaving police without the means of enforcement.²

When a driver decides to enter an intersection without the ability to fully clear the intersection, it impedes the movements of other road users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, and other motor vehicles. These unexpected conditions – blocked crosswalks and bike lanes – force pedestrians and bicyclists to make unpredictable movements to navigate the intersection, resulting in unsafe conditions and potential accidents and collisions.⁴

SB087 prohibits drivers from entering the intersection on a green or yellow signal if the vehicle cannot completely clear the intersection. Colloquially known as “Don’t Block the Box” the bill aims to improve the safety of pedestrians, bicyclists, and other road users by clearing the intersections and reducing the occurrences of blocked crosswalks and bike lanes. This is a distinct change to current law and provides an opportunity to target and correct the persistent gridlock problems where they are occurring.

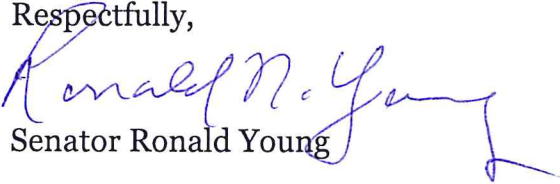
Additionally, clarifying language enables police to enforce existing traffic laws concerning intersection movements. Specifically, “Enforcement of the bill’s provisions are contingent on signs being installed at an intersection, in accordance with standards specified in the Maryland Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices.”¹ Lastly, according to the bill’s Fiscal and Policy Note the bill does not introduce new fines but relies on existing law where a violation is a “misdemeanor subject to the existing penalty of a \$500 minimum fine”.³

As background, **SB087** is a reintroduction of a 2021 bill that passed the House with overwhelming support, but the Senate was unable to act on prior to the end of Session.

I offer an amendment to add Senators Lam and West as Co-sponsors of the bill.

I ask that you vote favorably on **SB087** to finally bring improved safety and relief to communities across the entire state.

Respectfully,


Senator Ronald Young

References

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2. David Goodman, Do Not Block the Box Coalition. February 2021. "Written testimony on SB553".
3. Allison, Elizabeth. February 9, 2021. "SB553 Fiscal and Policy Note". (Dec. 20, 2021). https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2021RS/fnotes/bil_0003/sb0553.pdf
4. City of Baltimore. September 10, 2018. "Department of Transportation Launches "Don't Block the Box" Campaign" (Dec. 20, 2021) <https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/MDBALT/bulletins/20c419a>
5. City of Baltimore. "Don't Block the Box Campaign". (Dec 20, 2021) <https://transportation.baltimorecity.gov/noblockthebox>
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