

SB0176 - MVA - Rear-Facing Child Safety Seats - Re

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Position: FAV

January 13, 2022

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

Re: Letter of Support – Senate Bill 176 – Rear-Facing Child Safety Seats - Requirement

Dear Chairman Smith and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Transportation Motor Vehicle Administration (MDOT MVA) supports Senate Bill 176 as a means to better protect the roadways' most vulnerable users by requiring rear-facing safety seats to protect infants and toddlers in the event of a crash.

Senate Bill 176 requires children being transported in a motor vehicle under the age of two years to be secured in a rear-facing child safety seat that complies with the manufacturer's weight and height limitations. The American Academy of Pediatrics and National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) recommends that children should ride rear-facing for as long as possible, as it offers the best protection in the event of a crash.

When children ride forward-facing, their heads, which for toddlers are disproportionately large and heavy, are thrown forward, possibly resulting in spine and head injuries. In contrast, rear-facing seats cradle the child's neck, head, and spine during a crash, reducing the risk of injury. There are no known harmful effects of riding rear-facing longer while the benefits of doing so have been observed for years. The back of the seat also absorbs most of the impact energy, reducing the amount of force exerted on the infant or toddler.

Over the past five years, Maryland has averaged 12 fatalities and over 3,000 injuries in motor vehicle crashes involving passengers under the age of 13. During that time, there were 9 fatalities involving children under the age of 2 and an additional 581 were injured. Nationally, a total of 844 children younger than 13 died in motor vehicle crashes in 2019; nearly three-quarters of these deaths were children riding in passenger vehicles.

To reinforce NHTSA recommendations, 15 states, including neighboring Virginia and Pennsylvania, require children ride rear-facing until at least the age of 2. Adding the rear-facing seat requirement would bring Maryland in line with the most up-to-date safety standards.

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In enacting this requirement, the MDOT MVA is helping to protect some of Maryland's most vulnerable individuals and supporting our statewide goal of reaching zero fatalities on Maryland roadways. For these reasons, the Maryland Department of Transportation Motor Vehicle Administration respectfully requests the Committee grant Senate Bill 176 a favorable report.

Respectfully submitted,

James F. Ports, Jr.
Secretary
Maryland Department of Transportation
410-865-1001

Christine E. Nizer
Administrator
Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration
410-787-7830

SB0176_FAV_MedChi, MDAAP_Rear-Facing Child Safety

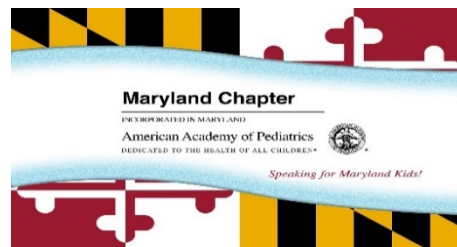
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TO: The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr., Chair
Members, Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
The Department of Transportation

FROM: Pamela Metz Kasemeyer
J. Steven Wise
Danna L. Kauffman
Christine K. Krone

DATE: January 13, 2022

RE: **SUPPORT** – Senate Bill 176 – *Vehicle Laws – Rear-Facing Child Safety Seats – Requirement*

On behalf of the Maryland State Medical Society and the Maryland Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, we submit this letter of **support** Senate Bill 176.

Senate Bill 176 provides an important enhancement to Maryland’s existing safety seat law. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) is the federal agency that addresses transportation safety issues for motor vehicles. They have responsibility for developing the recommendations and resulting regulations regarding the use of child safety seats and child positioning recommendations. NHTSA’s recommendations have been updated since Maryland last visited its child safety seat and positioning laws in 2012 and Senate Bill 176 proposes to enhance Maryland’s current requirements to meet federal recommendations.

Traffic accidents remain the leading cause of death for children. It has been conclusively demonstrated that properly securing a child in a child safety seat in accordance with the child safety seat and vehicle manufacturers’ instructions substantially contributes to the safety of children, should a motor vehicle accident occur. Senate Bill 176 enhances Maryland’s requirements and places them in line with federal recommendations. A favorable report is requested.

For more information call:

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