

SB87_Jan18_Senate_Daphnis.pdf

Uploaded by: Kristy Daphnis

Position: FAV

WRITTEN TESTIMONY - January 18, 2022
(SB0087), Vehicle Laws – Intersections – Prohibited Acts

Testimony Delivered by: Kristy Daphnis, Montgomery County Resident
Bill Position: Support

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today, in support of SB 87. SB87 is a bill that will help contribute to safety – for both motorists and pedestrians; while also helping to alleviate traffic congestion and traffic flow concerns.

The Problem: Throughout the State of Maryland, our local jurisdictions and police officers lack the ability to enforce unsafe behaviors at intersections. Because there is no law or enforcement mechanism, motorists can block intersections and pedestrian infrastructure within intersections (e.g., crosswalks). This leads to an unsafe situation which reduces safety and increases vehicular congestion.

Currently, it is not unusual for motorists to block intersections and/or crosswalks – especially on busy State highway corridors, and during heavily congested periods. This not only creates obstructions of the intersection itself (further contributing to congestion and gridlock), it also contributes to blockage of pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, significantly impeding safety for those trying to cross the street.

The Solution: Many States and localities across the Country already have legislation similar to SB87. However, we lack this in Maryland. Because we do not have this legislative framework, police are unable to enforce these unsafe behaviors, even in the most egregious of scenarios. Passage of SB87 will allow this enforcement to happen, deterring this behavior and improving safety in crosswalks, and reducing unnecessary gridlock and congestion.

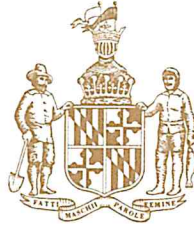
I urge you to support SB87, to help improve roadway safety and to reduce gridlock and congestion across the State of Maryland.

SB087_SenYoung_FAV (1).pdf

Uploaded by: Ronald Young

Position: FAV

RONALD N. YOUNG
Legislative District 3
Frederick County



Budget and Taxation Committee
Chair, Executive Nominations Committee

Senate Chair, Joint Subcommittee on
Program Open Space/Agricultural Land
Preservation

Joint Committee on Administrative,
Executive, and Legislative Review

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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.

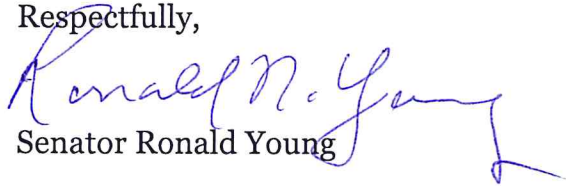
Additionally, clarifying language enables police to enforce existing traffic laws concerning intersection movements. Specifically, “Enforcement of the bill’s provisions are contingent on signs being installed at an intersection, in accordance with standards specified in the Maryland Manual on Uniform 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

1. Maryland Department of Transportation. February 16, 2021. "Letter of Information - Senate bill 553 - Vehicle Laws - Intersections - Prohibited Acts". (Dec. 20, 2021)
https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/cmte_testimony/2021/jpr/1hUeFc4bMu5PiN5Q1fUoj-k6m1QnMFUHm.pdf
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>
6. Zero Deaths Maryland. "BreakDown of Overall Deaths' ". (Dec 20, 2021)
<https://zerodeathsmd.gov/resources/crashdata/>

SB 87 - MoCo_Morningstar_FAV (GA 22).pdf

Uploaded by: Sara Morningstar

Position: FAV



Montgomery County

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SB 87

DATE: January 18, 2022

SPONSOR: Senator Young

ASSIGNED TO: Judicial Proceedings Committee

CONTACT PERSON: Sara Morningstar (sara.morningstar@montgomerycountymd.gov)

POSITION: SUPPORT (Montgomery County Department of Police and
Montgomery County Department of Transportation)

Vehicle Laws – Intersections – Prohibited Acts

Senate Bill 87 is a Statewide “Don’t Block the Box” bill prohibiting drivers from entering a signalized intersection on a circular green signal, a green arrow signal, or a steady yellow signal and failing to travel all the way through the intersection before the light changes to red. A vehicle making a left turn at a circular green signal may enter an intersection while yielding the right-of-way to a pedestrian or vehicle approaching from the opposition direction. For right turns, a vehicle may enter an intersection while yielding the right-of-way to pedestrians and bicyclists. Under Senate Bill 87, a police officer can issue a citation for Blocking the Box only if the intersection has been appropriately posted with prohibition signage in accordance with the Maryland Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices. Montgomery County Department of Police (MCPD) and Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) support the bill.

Traffic safety and roadway congestion rank among the highest complaints received from residents by law enforcement agencies in Maryland. Gridlock on our roadways is due not only to heavy traffic volumes, but incidents of vehicles entering intersections that cannot be fully cleared before the light changes to red. This can be particularly frustrating during morning and evening rush hour commutes.

Senate Bill 87 aligns with Montgomery County’s Vision Zero action plan focused on adopting road safety strategies that will make a difference in the lives of drivers, pedestrians and bicyclists. MCPD and MCDOT supports the measure for its positive effect on traffic congestion and improved pedestrian and bicycle safety and urge the Committee to adopt a favorable report.

SB0087 - SHA - Intersection Prohibited Acts_LOI_FI

Uploaded by: Patricia Westervelt

Position: INFO

January 18, 2022

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 87 – Vehicle Laws – Intersections – Prohibited Acts

Dear Chairman Smith and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) takes no position on Senate Bill 87 but offers the following information for the Committee's consideration.

Senate Bill 87 prohibits drivers from entering the intersection of a green or yellow signal if the vehicle cannot completely clear the intersection. 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.

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 crashes.

Senate Bill 87 aims to improve pedestrian safety by reducing the likelihood of pedestrian crashes. Additionally, clarifying language enables law enforcement officials to enforce existing traffic laws concerning intersection movements.

The Maryland Department of Transportation respectfully requests the Committee consider this information when deliberating Senate Bill 87.

Sincerely,

Mitch Baldwin
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Maryland State Highway Administration
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Pilar Helm
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Maryland Department of Transportation
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