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WASHINGTON REGIONAL ALCOHOL PROGRAM

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February 21, 2022

Members of the Judiciary Committee
Maryland House of Delegates
Annapolis, Maryland

Re.: Support for "Drunk Driving Offenses – Ignition Interlock System Program," House Bill 557, Senator Atterbeary (D-Howard County)

"Interlocks typically are used as a condition of probation for DWI offenders, to prevent them from driving while impaired by alcohol after their driver's licenses have been reinstated."

– National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), "Countermeasures That Work," April 2018

Dear Delegates:

On behalf of the Maryland nonprofit Washington Regional Alcohol Program's (WRAP) Board of Directors, staff, volunteers and the more than six-million Maryland residents we serve in the fight against drunk driving and underage drinking (including having served as project director of both Maryland's Checkpoint Strikeforce campaign and "Maryland Remembers" ceremony), I wanted to formally communicate to you **WRAP's unequivocal support for House Bill 557, "Drunk Driving Offenses – Ignition Interlock System Program"** (Delegate Vanessa Atterbeary, D-Howard County).

Succinctly, House Bill 557 seeks to expand the universe of persons subject to Maryland's Ignition Interlock System Program to include persons put on probation for either a driving under the influence of alcohol (DUI, 21-902[a]) or driving while impaired by alcohol (DWI, 21-902[b]) violation.

According to the Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA) ("Maryland's Ignition Interlock Program, Status Report," 2020), 40-percent (40.4%) of persons adjudicated for either DUI or DWI in Maryland in 2019 were granted probation in the form of probation before judgment (PBJ) and therefore NOT subject to the full universe of public protections namely participation in Maryland's proven effective interlock program.

(over)

A coalition of diverse interests using effective education, innovative programs and targeted advocacy to end alcohol-impaired driving and underage drinking in the Washington, DC metro area.

A copy of WRAP's current financial statement is available by writing WRAP, 7700 Leesburg Pike, Suite 249, Falls Church, VA 22043 or by calling 703.893.0461. Documents and information submitted under the MD Openable Solicitations Act are also available for the cost of postage and copies from the MD Secretary of State, State House, Annapolis, MD 21401, 410-976-5334.

With ignition interlock devices reducing “repeat offenses for driving while intoxicated by about 70-percent” (U.S. Centers for Disease Control) and that interlocks are proven to be “highly effective in allowing a vehicle to be started by sober drivers but not by alcohol-impaired drivers” (NHTSA), House Bill 557 looks to simply ensure public safety along that route used by half of persons arrested for drunk driving in Maryland by subjecting *all* 21-902(a) and 21-902(b) offenders to Maryland’s interlock program as a condition of (PBJ) probation.

NHTSA data (“Countermeasures That Work,” 2020) shows that “interlocks typically are used as a condition of probation for DWI offenders, to prevent them from driving while impaired by alcohol after their driver’s licenses have been reinstated.” The need for such in Maryland is all too clear as fiscal year 2020 MVA data shows that more than 6,300 drivers were prevented from driving after consuming alcohol last year.

Maryland’s interlock program is “an effective tool to help prevent the devastating consequences that can result when an impaired driver gets behind the wheel” (MVA). In a state where nearly a third (32% in 2019, NHTSA) of traffic fatalities still involve drunk drivers, *not* using Maryland’s existing -- and offender-paid -- interlock program for the full universe of DUI and or DWI offenders in the state is, at best, not using every tool in Maryland’s toolbox to prevent drunk driving. At worst, it is potentially deadly as 2019 also bore witness to Maryland posting a nearly 30-percent (29.45%) *increase* in the number of alcohol-impaired traffic fatalities that year (NHTSA).

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As a means of both more effectively monitoring a drunk driver’s probation period in Maryland and strengthening Maryland’s “Drunk Driving Reduction Act of 2016” (“Noah’s Law”) which “continues to have an impact on Maryland’s Ignition Interlock Program and is helping to keep drunk drivers off the road” (MVA), the Maryland nonprofit Washington Regional Alcohol Program strongly supports House Bill 557. To that end, we also thank you, in advance, for your consideration of favorably reporting this potentially lifesaving legislation.

Thank you, in advance, for your consideration. I may be directly reached with any questions at either 703-893-0461 or at kurt@wrap.org.

Cordially,



Kurt Gregory Erickson
President