

Timothy P. Ernst
10616 Dunkirk Drive
Silver Spring, MD 20902
tpernst@hotmail.com
301-938-8979

HB 70 SUPPORT

Safe Access for All (SAFE) Roads Act of 2023

Environment & Transportation Committee, Appropriations Committee
February 2, 2023

Dear Chair Barve, Vice Chair Stein, Members of Environment & Transportation Committee and Members of Appropriations Committee: I'm here to testify in support of HB 70, SAFE Roads Act of 2023.

My name is Timothy Ernst. My family and I have lived in Silver Spring, MD for over 20 years. We live several blocks from Georgia Avenue – statistically, the most dangerous state highway in Maryland if you are a pedestrian.

While doing research, I discovered many deaths of my fellow community members along Georgia Avenue corridor. Here are just a few of those incidents:

On August 11, 2018, 49-year-old Ramon Sanches was hit and killed by a car while attempting to cross Georgia Avenue at Viers Mill Road.

Nine days later, on August 20, 2018, 56-year-old Alberto Hilario was killed by an automobile while trying to cross Georgia Avenue near Glenallan Avenue.

And four days after that, on August 24, 2018, 41-year-old Mauricio Corerra was hit by a car and killed at Georgia Avenue and Reddie Drive near Wheaton Metro Station.

On April 28, 2021, Claire Weissmeyer Grossman was killed by a woman driving a Toyota Camry on Georgia Avenue near Rippling Brook Drive. Mrs. Grossman, age 65, had just gotten off a bus from work. Her family told a local reporter that Mrs. Grossman did not own a car. She relied on public transit to get around Montgomery County.

Five years earlier, in October 2016, Mrs. Grossman's husband Robert Grossman was killed by an automobile while crossing Georgia Avenue near Regina Drive – about 1,000 feet away from the spot his wife was killed.

In April 2022, Eric F. Grosse, Jr. died after being hit by a Subaru Forester on Tuckerman Lane and Kings Riding Way in North Bethesda. Age 74, Rick was my cousin and my friend. He was a devoted husband, father and grandfather. He was a professor at Montgomery College and volunteered in his County Council member's office.

Three years earlier, in 2019, a pedestrian named Jennifer DiMauro, age 31, was killed at the same intersection in North Bethesda.

I recently participated in a "community walk" on the sidewalk along Georgia Avenue with my County Councilmember (Evan Glass) and Delegate Vaughn Stewart (District 19) who is a member of the Transportation Committee.

We watched senior citizens trying to cross six lanes of traffic on Georgia Avenue to get to the bus stop on the other side. In most cases, there was not a crosswalk or a traffic signal anywhere in sight. Many families in the Aspen Hill neighborhood use public transit, bicycles and sidewalks to get to and from their jobs and grocery stores every day. Many cannot afford private vehicles.

I invite every member of this committee to sponsor a community walk with pedestrians and bicyclists in your community. I recommend that you try crossing a six-lane state highway in your community as a pedestrian or bicyclist.

Maryland SHA must invest time and money to re-design state roads like Georgia Avenue to give pedestrians a fighting chance at survival.

I personally invite Paul Wiedefeld, Maryland's new transportation secretary, to visit Georgia Avenue and walk one mile on our sidewalks. Then tell me how safe it feels to be a pedestrian in Maryland.

I strongly urge a favorable report on HB70.