



HB70 – Safe Access for All (SAFE) Roads Act of 2023

Testimony before Environment and Transportation Committee

February 2, 2023

Position: Favorable

Dear Environment and Transportation Committee Members,

My name is Ruth Auerbach, and I represent the 750+ members of Indivisible Howard County. We are providing written testimony today to support HB70, to improve pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure and safety. Indivisible Howard County is an active member of the Maryland Legislative Coalition (with 30,000+ members). We are grateful for the leadership of Delegate Charkoudian in sponsoring this bill.

Indivisible Howard County strongly supports all the programs to improve pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure and the requirement for reports on relevant issues in the bill. However, this testimony will focus on the program to install crosswalks around Suburban Activity Centers and its impact. In Howard County, we have many Suburban Activity Centers, and many are located in the vicinity of state highways. Unfortunately, getting to and from these areas on foot can be difficult.

One of the benefits of the state installing such crosswalks that we have already observed in Howard County, is that the county will simultaneously improve the surrounding pedestrian and bike infrastructure to make the entire area more walkable and bikeable. For example, the recent installation of a crosswalk at the intersection of MD-175 and Dobbin Road, has not only made this busy intersection much safer for pedestrians, it has been followed by Howard County installing a mixed-use path along Dobbin Road, where no sidewalk previously existed. Phase 1 of the project has already been completed, and we are awaiting Phases 2 and 3. Personally, I have occasionally biked a very indirect route, completely avoiding the intersection, to get to shops and restaurants on the other side. I look forward to biking on this new infrastructure when it is completed, and the trip is faster and safer.

Many more areas in Howard County and around the state could be made safe and accessible for pedestrians by the crosswalk installation program described in this legislation. The members of Indivisible Howard County enthusiastically support walkable and bikeable communities.

This legislation will promote safety, health, and the environment. Thank you for your consideration of this important legislation. **We respectfully urge a favorable report on this bill.**

Ruth Auerbach
Columbia, MD 21046