

March 8, 2023

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

RE: Letter of Support – Senate Bill 528 – Drunk Driving Offenses – Ignition Interlock System Program

Dear Chair Smith and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) supports Senate Bill 528 as an opportunity to expand the use of an effective tool in combating the dangers of impaired driving.

Senate Bill 528 serves to strengthen and increase participation in the Ignition Interlock Program (IIP) by requiring that an individual found to be driving while under the influence or impaired and is either convicted, suspended, or revoked on points, or is granted probation before judgement, must enter the Ignition Interlock Program (IIP).

Over the past five years in Maryland, there have been nearly 800 fatalities as a result of crashes involving an impaired driver. Deaths resulting from impaired driving crashes account for one-third of all roadway fatalities. Maryland strives to reduce that number by setting the goal of reaching zero fatalities on our roadways by 2030. The MDOT Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA) supports the use of the IIP as an effective tool to reduce drunk driving crashes. Research continues to show that drivers who have interlocks installed are significantly less likely to have a repeat drunk driving offense than those who do not. Since 2006, ignition interlocks prevented 26 million attempts to drink and drive (Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) Ignition Interlock Report, January 2022). This statistic demonstrates the effectiveness at keeping impaired drivers off the roadways, and that comprehensive ignition interlock laws help states reduce impaired driving fatalities.

In 2016, the landmark passage of Maryland’s Noah’s Law strengthened administrative sanctions for impaired driving and significantly expanded the IIP. Participation in the IIP has increased as a result, and these changes are helping to keep Maryland’s roadway users safe. Ignition interlocks allow drivers to continue driving sober.

Strengthening Maryland’s IIP program by requiring participation for impaired drivers receiving a probation before judgement disposition is an important next step in strengthening Maryland’s network of impaired driving prevention programs and preventing repeat offenses. Although Maryland has implemented many measures to help end impaired driving, MADD, the national advocacy organization, released their 2021 scorecard in which Maryland received a C+. In that report, MADD noted that Maryland’s all-offender law contains a “loophole,” which they

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describe as the largest in the country. Specifically, first-time convicted drunk drivers can avoid a mandatory ignition interlock referral when that verdict is set aside, and the drunk driver is granted a probation before judgement disposition. Senate Bill 528 addresses this gap by requiring all those receiving a probation before judgement for violating Transportation Article § 21-902 (a) or (b) offenses to enroll in the IIP.

For these reasons, the Maryland Department of Transportation respectfully requests the Committee grant Senate Bill 528 a favorable report.

Respectfully submitted,

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