



(SB0016), Safe Access for All (SAFE) Roads Act of 2023

WRITTEN TESTIMONY - January 30, 2023

Testimony Delivered by:

**Kristy Daphnis, Montgomery County Resident
Montgomery County Families for Safe Streets Co-Founder &
Executive Steering Committee Member**

Bill Position: Support

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today, in support of SB 16. SB16 is a bill that will require the Department of Transportation to recommend and implement certain design elements for pedestrian and bicycle safety when developing certain projects; will require the State Highway Administration to submit certain reports including pedestrian and bicycle safety data, analyses, and plans to the General Assembly by certain dates; and other requirements generally relating to pedestrian and bicycle safety.

While the State of Maryland and several jurisdictions have committed to Vision Zero, we have not made significant progress toward implementation in a manner that prevents deaths. In certain instances, there are intersections and corridors where pedestrians and cyclists are killed, again and again, yet the infrastructure has not changed, and meaningful discussion and action around how to make the roadway safe for all are stalled or non-existent.

A few important features of SB16 include:

1. Implementation of context-driven design elements along State Highways, including counter measures that have been proven at the Federal level.
2. Short-term interventions to improve safety, even if the ideal solution will take many years.
3. Addressing State-agency workforce issues, by helping to ensure the SHA can recruit and hire professionals necessary to carry out the work.
4. Reporting on existing conditions, especially in dense residential and urban areas and related to signals and crosswalks – and, further, requiring a safe crossing every 1/5 mile in areas and corridors that are heavily dependent on transit.

I began to get involved in pedestrian and traffic safety issues after my child's care provider, Etsegenet Hurissa, was killed while she was crossing Georgia Avenue on the way home from her evening nursing class. She was crossing at an unmarked crosswalk near a bus stop, and was struck by a speeding driver. To get to a signalized crosswalk, she would have needed to walk a full mile out of her way – as the nearest signal was 0.5 miles away. While I am grateful that there was a signal installed nearby, and the speed limit was reduced – installation of that signal took nearly 6 years, and an additional death. Had there been a signals and safe crosswalks at 1/5 mile intervals before her death Etsegenet may still be alive today.

As a Leader of Montgomery County Families for Safe Streets, I work with my colleagues and victim's families to plan and carry out memorials for traffic crash victims across Montgomery County, of which we have planned dozens over the past 3 years. We see this situation time and time again - areas where there are no safe crossings, along transit dependent corridors dotted with bus stops, businesses, and highly dense residential areas. In some cases, we have returned to the same intersections or corridors 3, 4, 5, even 6 times. Passage and implementation of this Bill would lead to a more fulsome analysis and implementation of the State-issued Context Driven Design Guide, as well as a thoughtful process for installing safe crossings and other interventions.

I urge you to support SB16, to help improve roadway safety and to reduce gridlock and congestion across the State of Maryland. If passed and implemented, this Bill will certainly save lives.