

March 28, 2023

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Support House Bill 519 - Bikes on Sidewalks



Dear Chair and Members of the Committee:

I am a resident of District 38C, Chair of the Worcester County Bike and Pedestrian Coalition and the Eastern Shore Representative of the Maryland Bike and Pedestrian Advisory Committee. In these capacities I am writing in support of HB 519.

Currently Maryland law 21-1103 prohibits people, including children from riding bicycles and similar devices like scooters on sidewalks, unless there is a local ordinance expressly allowing it that jurisdiction. A number of larger jurisdictions have implemented such ordinances including City of Annapolis, Montgomery and Howard Counties and have not experienced complaints from pedestrians or issues with bicyclists on sidewalks.

Here on the Eastern Shore, as in other places, many people rely on bicycles for transportation, especially in lower income communities which also lack frequent bus or train options. While we are working to create a regional network of trails and bike lanes to allow safe multi-modal transportation for trips to school, shopping, and work, there are still many areas that do not have routes separate from vehicle traffic, and riding on the sidewalk is in some places the only safe option. An example in Worcester County is the walkway on the Harry Kelly Bridge that brings route 50 traffic into Ocean City. Children biking to school and J-1 students biking to jobs should not risk being ticketed for riding on sidewalks when there is not another safe option. People are currently riding on sidewalks to get around safely, yet Maryland law prohibits this.

HB 519 will align Maryland Code with safe and equitable biking and is in line with Maryland's Vision Zero goals of eliminating death and injury to vulnerable road users. The bill includes a requirement for bike riders to yield to pedestrians and those who do not could still be cited for a violation. It also permits local jurisdictions to prohibit bikes on sidewalks where it is deemed unsafe.

Please support HB 519 to make Maryland roads safer for vulnerable road users.

Sincerely,

Patti Stevens, Chair
Worcester County Bike and Pedestrian Coalition

cc: Senator Mary Beth Carozza