

Committee: Environment and Transportation
Testimony on: HB 511 - Vehicle Laws - Bicycles - Operation at Intersections
Submitting: Joseph Jakuta, Resident of Mount Rainier, MD
Position: Favorable
Hearing Date: February 15, 2024

Dear Chair and Committee Members:

Thank you for allowing my testimony today in support of HB 511. I am a resident of Prince George's County and have been a regular bicycle commuter the early 2000's predominately in the Washington, DC area, but also for several years in Baltimore City. HB511 is a common-sense safety measure that would put in place stop-as-yield, colloquially called the Idaho Stop in Maryland.

This is primarily a safety issue for bicyclist and given the increasing number of casualties on Maryland roadways we should be taking every effort to make traveling safer. It might seem counter intuitive that stop-as-yield would help with that, but according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) after enactment of stop bicycling collisions reduced by 23% at intersections in states where adoption occurred.

As someone that has been biking for so long I can attest to why. A biker is more likely to get hit by someone turning right at an intersection when the biker is going straight. And I do mean I know this, since this is how I have been hit several times. Allowing the bicyclist to get out in front of the situation increases visibility to the driver making the right-hand turn making the bicyclists trip safer and more likely that the driver will not cause a crash.

Of course, the law would still require the biker to stop if cars already have the right of way or are approaching closely from other directions, which is totally reasonable and appropriate.

Also, Washington, DC enacted stop-as-yield last year. As someone who regularly crosses between DC and Maryland regularly, with most of my time spent bicycling in Washington, DC. As reenter my home state it has gotten increasingly confusing to remember which laws are on the books, especially when the stop-as-yield is so much safer for myself as a bicyclist. Though I do not bike on the Eastern Shore typically, it should be noted that Delaware also has stop-as-yield in place.

I love bicycle commuting. It saves money, makes myself healthier, gets me to and from work much quicker than other means, and benefits others health by reducing pollution. But the one thing that does give me pause every day is that it makes it more likely that my young children may lose me in an accident. The General Assembly has the opportunity to make that less likely this year.

Please adopt a FAVORABLE recommendation on HB511.