

TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

HB511 – Vehicle Laws - Bicycles – Operation at Intersections

POSITION: Oppose

By: Gail Sunderman

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I am a resident of Baltimore City who has to navigate bicyclists who do not follow the traffic laws. I once almost hit a bicyclist who speed past me at a stop light as I was making a left turn on a green light. I barely missed hitting the bicyclist. Another time I made a left hand turn, and almost hit a bicyclist traveling the wrong way on a divided boulevard. **I oppose HB511 Vehicle Laws – Bicycles – Operation at Intersections**, which would allow persons operating a bicycle to proceed without stopping at intersections. This bill, if passed will only make the roads less safe.

Many terms in the bill are ambiguous. The bill states that a bicyclist can proceed through a stop sign without stopping. Does that include only signs or does it include stop lights? The lack of clarity is confusing. Others terms, such as “*may cautiously* make a turn” will be defined differently by different people. What is “*a reasonable rate*” of speed for a bicycle? And how ‘near’ is “near enough to the intersection that is poses an immediate danger”? Is ‘near’ a measured distance? Or does ‘near’ depend on different variables, including the judgement of the bicyclist, road conditions, visibility, and weather? This ambiguity will cause confusion among both motorists and bicyclists.

According to the National Highway Traffic Administration, intersections are particularly dangerous for bicyclists. This bill will only make intersections more dangerous if bicyclists are legally allowed to go through an intersection without stopping. Unlike cars which, after stopping at an intersection can make a left hand turn on a red light, this bill does not require bicyclists to stop before proceeding through an intersection.

The roads would be safer if bicyclists abide by the same traffic laws as motorists. This bill will not make the roads safer. I urge an unfavorable report on HB511.