



## AAA Mid-Atlantic's Testimony in OPPOSITION to HB 639

### Vehicle Laws – Vehicle Laws - Protective Headgear Requirement for Motorcycle Rides - Exception (In Remembrance of Gary "Pappy" Boward)

*Sponsors: Delegate Wivell et al*

- AAA Mid-Atlantic **opposes** [HB 639](#), which exempts an individual who is 21 years of age or older from wearing protective headgear, or a helmet, while operating or riding a motorcycle under certain circumstances.
- Motorcycle safety is trending in the wrong direction. As disheartening as the nationwide fatality trends are, the numbers for motorcyclists are even worse. In 2021, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), more than 6,000 motorcyclists were killed across the country – the most since the federal government started keeping records in 1975. That's a 9% jump from the prior record in 2020.
- There are multiple reasons for this increase in fatalities, including drunk driving and speeding, but a decrease in helmet usage among motorcyclists contributed as well. After reaching a peak of 71% in 2018, the percentage of riders using helmets declined to 69% in 2020 and 65% in 2021, according to a NHTSA observational survey.
- According to the Maryland Institute for Emergency Medical Services Systems (MIEMSS), Maryland's trauma centers treated 904 patients involved in motorcycle crashes during fiscal 2019. Ninety percent of these patients (812) were age 21 or older, and 28.4% of them (231) sustained a head injury, 26 of whom subsequently died. Of the 231 riders who sustained head injuries, 26 percent were not wearing a helmet.
- According to a [report on Motorcycle Crashes and Helmet Use](#), in 2021, there were 1,343 motorcycle crashes in Maryland, resulting in the deaths of 76 motorcyclists (*driver-specific*). Of those killed, 15 or nearly 20% were not wearing helmets. (*Source: University of Maryland School of Medicine, National Study Center for Trauma and Emergency Services*)
- AAA and traffic safety advocates across the country want to decrease the number of motorcycle-related injuries, and further reduce motorcyclist fatalities by supporting and strengthening laws that require helmet use, not repealing existing laws.
- Helmets are effective: According to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, motorcycle helmets reduce the risk of death by 37-42%, and motorcyclists not wearing helmets are three times more likely than helmeted riders to suffer traumatic brain injuries.
- AAA **opposes** any legislation that will weaken existing traffic safety laws and put motorcyclists, bicyclists, motorists or pedestrians at a greater risk of injury or a traffic fatality; therefore, we oppose **HB 639** and respectfully urge the Committee to render an **unfavorable** report.

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