



EMERGENCY NURSES  
ASSOCIATION

Maryland State Council  
Safe Practice Safe Care

To: Maryland House Environment and Transportation Committee  
Housse Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Date: February 22, 2024

Re: **SB 503 Vehicle Laws – Protective Headgear Requirement – Exception (In Remembrance of Gary “Pappy” Boward)**  
UNFAVORABLE oral testimony

Good day Chairman Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, Committee members,

My name is Lisa Tenney, and I am testifying on behalf of The Maryland Emergency Nurses Association in OPPOSITION to **SB 503 Vehicle Laws – Protective Headgear Requirement – Exception** (In Remembrance of Gary “Pappy” Boward).

The Maryland Emergency Nurses Association submitted a joint unfavorable written testimony to the Committee along with Advocates for Auto and Highway Safety and SMARTER (Skilled Motorcyclist Association - Responsible, Trained and Educated Riders, Inc.) Upon further examination of this proposed bill to repeal Maryland’s highly effective ALL MOTORCYCLE RIDERS requirement to wear a helmet, here are more thoughts.

For the motorcyclist, this is an “emotional” issue. As Americans, they want their “freedom” to choose not to wear a helmet so that they can “feel the wind blow through their hair” to enhance their riding experiences. They want to be able to choose this momentary joy and choose to take the risk that they may very well cause their own death, or a long term injury, or unspeakable pain to their families, or possibly become a burden to the Maryland taxpayers, should they need long term care from a traumatic brain injury.

This is also an “emotional” issue for emergency nurses. Not because it is difficult to physically care for trauma victims - it is a privilege for us to use our skills and expertise to care for any trauma victim. The emotional part for emergency nurses is caring for the patients’ loved ones when they arrive to see their husband, father, son, or daughter who has either been killed or maimed in a motorcycle crash. It is especially hard when a traumatic brain injury could have been prevented had the motorcyclist only worn a helmet. These families are devastated and brokenhearted as they face their forever-changed lives. We do not have answers for them when they ask, “Why wasn’t he wearing his helmet?” This is OUR emotional issue.

Of the many hats emergency nurses wear, the easiest one is to advocate for injury prevention and zero vehicle related deaths. We would prefer that taxpayer money be spent preventing injuries rather than caring for patients with traumatic brain injuries. This is our emotional reason for being here before you today: to advocate for the prevention of morbidity (death) and mortality (injury).

Please stay the course on requiring helmets for all motorcyclists in Maryland. Please prioritize public safety above emotion. Maryland's emergency nurses thank you in advance for an UNfavorable bipartisan review of HB 639.

Respectfully,

Lisa Tenney

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