

I am writing to express my strong support for **SB0503** - Establishing an exception to the prohibition against operating or riding on a motorcycle without certain protective headgear for an individual at least 21 years of age who has been licensed to operate a motorcycle for at least 2 years or has completed a certain motorcycle safety course and for the individual's passenger.

I am a retired USAF Veteran with 41 years of Federal service, resident of Maryland since 1993, and proud lifetime member of ABATE of Maryland, Inc. helping to protect the rights of motorcycle riders throughout the State of Maryland.

Thirty-Three (33) States, almost 65% of the United States, have either no law requiring the wearing of a motorcycle helmet (3 States) or a law that allows the motorcycle rider a choice to wear a helmet after a certain age (30 States). I would like to see Maryland become the next State to allow the choice to wear a helmet while riding a motorcycle. While I understand the importance of helmet use in preventing head injuries and saving lives, I also recognize that mandatory helmet laws infringe upon the rights of responsible adults to make informed choices about their own safety. It is essential to strike a balance between promoting safety and respecting individual freedoms.

Here are the key points I urge you to consider:

1. **Personal Choice:** Senate Bill 503 recognizes that adults should have the freedom to choose whether to wear a helmet while riding a motorcycle. It respects the autonomy of riders to assess their own risk tolerance and make responsible decisions.
2. **Safety Training:** The bill requires motorcyclists to meet specific criteria before opting out of helmet use. These criteria include being 21 years or older, having at least two years of riding experience, and completing an approved safety course. This approach strikes a balance between personal choice and safety awareness.
3. **Helmets and Motorcycle Crashes:** Research has shown that helmets do not necessarily prevent motorcycle accidents. Instead, safe riding practices, education, and awareness play a more significant role in reducing accidents. Senate Bill 503 acknowledges this reality.
4. **Support from Motorcycle Advocacy Groups:** The American Motorcycle Association, the country's largest motorcycle rights advocacy group, supports voluntary helmet use. They recognize that helmets are not just safety devices but also personal apparel choices.
5. **Opposition and Considerations:** While some organizations oppose this bill, it is essential to recognize that adults should have the right to make their own decisions. The legislation strikes a reasonable balance by ensuring that riders meet specific qualifications before choosing not to wear a helmet.

I respectfully request that you support Senate Bill 503 and advocate for its passage. By doing so, you will uphold individual liberty while maintaining a responsible approach to motorcycle safety.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I appreciate your dedication to representing our State's interests.

Sincerely,

Mark S. Kerzner
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