



Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Laura Herrera Scott, M.D., M.P.H., Secretary

February 13, 2024

The Honorable William C. Smith Jr.
Chair, Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

RE: SB 421 – Drunk Driving Offenses – Ignition Interlock System Program — Letter of Support

Dear Chair Smith:

The Maryland Department of Health (Department) respectfully submits this letter of support for SB 421 – Drunk Driving Offenses-Ignition Interlock System Program. This bill would require an individual placed on probation or whose license is suspended or revoked pursuant to driving while impaired by alcohol or drugs to successfully complete the Ignition Interlock System Program.

The Department supports the installation of ignition interlock devices in motor vehicles to prevent operation of the vehicle by a driver who has a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) above a specified level. Interlocks are most often installed in vehicles belonging to people who have been convicted of alcohol-impaired driving to give them an opportunity to legally, when unimpaired by alcohol, provide transportation for themselves and others who may rely on them to get to places like school and work. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), “ignition interlock devices reduce driving while impaired (DWI) repeat offenses by about 70% while they are installed.”¹

Impairment from alcohol or drugs is a well-known risk factor for traffic injury on our roadways. These substances impair coordination and the ability to perceive and respond to hazards. In Maryland, more than 30 percent of traffic-related fatalities involve alcohol and or drugs.² In 2022 in Maryland, there were 135 fatal crashes, 1,704 injury crashes and 3,938 property damage crashes in which the driver was impaired by alcohol or drugs.³

Driving under the influence is a serious offense that poses a significant threat to public safety. Numerous studies provide strong evidence that interlocks, while they are in use in offenders'

¹ Increasing Alcohol Ignition Interlock Use, https://www.cdc.gov/transportationsafety/impaired_driving/ignition_interlock_states.html December 29, 2022

² Maryland Strategic Highway Safety Plan 2021-2026

³ Maryland Cras Data, Vision Zero Website <https://zerodeathsmd.gov/resources/crashdata/>

vehicles, are effective in reducing re-arrest rates.⁴ However, the potential for interlock programs to reduce alcohol-related crashes is currently limited by the small proportion of offenders who participate in the programs and the lack of a persistent beneficial effect once the interlock is removed.⁴ Nonetheless, these devices offer a practical and measurable means of monitoring and assisting an individual's adherence to legal transportation. This additional layer of supervision enhances the accountability of the offender, creating a safer environment for all road users.

If you would like to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to contact Sarah Case-Herron, Director of Governmental Affairs at sarah.case-herron@maryland.gov.

Sincerely,



Laura Herrera Scott, M.D., M.P.H.
Secretary

⁴ Elder RW, Voas R, Beirness D, Shults RA, Sleet DA, Nichols JL, Compton R; Task Force on Community Preventive Services. Effectiveness of ignition interlocks for preventing alcohol-impaired driving and alcohol-related crashes: a Community Guide systematic review. *Am J Prev Med.* 2011 Mar;40(3):362-76. doi: 10.1016/j.amepre.2010.11.012. PMID: 21335270. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/21335270/>