



**Auto Consumer Alliance**  
13900 Laurel Lakes Avenue, Suite 100  
Laurel, MD 20707

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**Testimony to the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee  
SB 826— Vehicle Laws – Bicycles – Operation at Intersections  
Position: Favorable**

The Honorable Will Smith  
Judicial Proceedings Committee  
2 East, Miller Senate Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401  
cc: Members, Judicial Proceedings Committee

Feb. 28, 2024

**Dear Chairman Smith and Committee Members,**

I'm a consumer advocate and Executive Director of Consumer Auto, a non-profit group that works to protect Maryland consumers and secure safety, transparency, and fair treatment for Maryland drivers and car buyers. I'm also a rather avid cyclist in and around Baltimore City and Baltimore County.

We support **SB 826** because it will make Maryland's roads safer, more convenient, and more hospitable for bicyclists. That will encourage more cycling – which promotes fitness (and pleasure), helps our state move toward meeting its climate goals and works to help cut traffic congestion (and the noise, pollution, and stress it causes) -- and thus benefits even those who are annoyed by seeing cyclists on our streets.

Other than walking, it's hard to think of a form of transportation that is more environmentally friendly or affordable than cycling. Yet even in a time of climate crisis and when many people are struggling to afford the fast-rising cost of vehicles and motorized transportation, our streets have gotten more deadly for cyclists. With more and more very large vehicles that often have poor forward visibility on our streets, the number of deaths on U.S. roads among cyclists rose 38% between 2011 and 2020. <sup>1</sup> In 2022, more than 850 cyclists were killed on U.S. roads and more than 50,000 were injured.<sup>2</sup>

In 2020, 26% of cyclist deaths came at an intersection<sup>3</sup> – and every cyclist is well aware of the danger we face from cars turning or rear-ending cyclists or accelerating dangerously through intersections.

For those who don't ride, the idea that allowing bicyclists to roll through intersections with stop signs at a cautious speed improves bicycle safety might seem counter-intuitive. But cyclists have better balance when they maintain momentum. And they're more visible and more noticeable to drivers when they're in motion. And rolling through an intersection – rather than stopping and then pedaling rather hard to get started again – minimizes the time cyclists are exposed to dangerous traffic in intersections.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nhtsa.gov/sites/nhtsa.gov/files/2022-03/Bicyclist-Yield-As-Stop-Fact-Sheet-032422-v3-tag.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://ncsrsafety.org/bicyclists-injured-in-motor-vehicle-crashes-2022/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.nhtsa.gov/sites/nhtsa.gov/files/2022-03/Bicyclist-Yield-As-Stop-Fact-Sheet-032422-v3-tag.pdf>



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Data also confirms cyclists' experience that the "stop as yield" policy is safer as well as more efficient. When Delaware established such a rule in 2017, crashes involving cyclists at intersections with stop signs declined 23% over the following 30 months. After Idaho established such a rule in 1982, crashes declined 14.5%.<sup>4</sup> Ten states and the District of Columbia now use some form of the "stop as yield" law; none of them has reported a spike in cyclist crashes or fatalities after implementing it.

Part of the reason this reform has worked so well is that it simply codifies what most cyclists already do: Proceed cautiously through stop signs when the intersection is clear and it appears safe to do so. While you may see the occasional exception, most cyclists do so cautiously indeed – because we know very well that we're highly vulnerable to much larger, faster-moving vehicles at intersection. At the same time, coming to a full stop at each stop sign on a quiet street is difficult and inefficient for cyclists – and really does not improve public safety.

Bikes are (properly) subject to most of the same rules of the road as cars and trucks. But there are obvious differences in how they function – and in the danger they pose to other road users. The "stop as yield" rule **SB 826** would establish reflects those differences in a way that makes good sense – and makes cycling both more safe and more practical.

**We support SB 826 and hope you'll give it a FAVORABLE report.**

Sincerely,

Franz Schneiderman  
Consumer Auto

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.nhtsa.gov/sites/nhtsa.gov/files/2022-03/Bicyclist-Yield-As-Stop-Fact-Sheet-032422-v3-tag.pdf>