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Chair Smith and Committee Members,

Thank you for your service to Maryland. I am writing to ask that you support SB 826 to make Maryland's roadways safer for bicyclists by allowing a Bicycle Safety Stop at stop signs. Thank you Chair Smith for sponsoring this bill.

SB 826 would allow cyclists to treat stop signs as yield signs and continue moving through an intersection slowly and cautiously after ensuring it is safe to do so.

Intersections are particularly dangerous for cyclists: the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration reports that nearly 55 percent of cycling injuries occurring at intersections. At intersections, cyclists can be hit by inattentive or aggressive drivers who are behind them, making right turns, or accelerating to try and pass on the left after stopping. As one who bikes regularly for commuting and errands in my home district of D22/Route 1 corridor, D20/Takoma Park-Silver Spring Area, and beyond, I have had too many near misses with drivers making right turns who "didn't see" me, and have had aggressive drivers try to speed around me at a stop sign when there was not room to pass due to oncoming traffic.

SB 826 would reduce these risks by allowing cyclists to yield rather than stopping completely, when it is safe to do so, because cyclists are more visible to drivers when moving and are less exposed to the risks of intersections if they can keep moving through them. Data evidence for improved safety; eight states and the District of Columbia have adopted the Bicycle Safety Stop, including Delaware, where crashes at intersections involving bicycles dropped 23 percent in the following 2.5 years. Maryland should heed such data and allow a Bicycle Safety Stop.

Bicyclists are subject to all of the same laws as drivers, though cyclists are far more vulnerable than drivers. Maryland should allow reasonable adjustments to the law to reduce cyclists' vulnerability and reduce deaths and injury at intersections. This, in turn, would increase the number of residents who are willing to cycle, reducing traffic congestion and climate impacts.

Allowing a Bicycle Safety Stop will also address racial inequities in traffic enforcement, as failing to stop is subject to a citation. In 2020, Bicycling Magazine analyzed data for police stops of cyclists in Washington, DC, Oakland and New Orleans and found that Black cyclists were disproportionately stopped relative to Whites. In DC, Blacks represented nearly 88 percent of stops despite being 46 percent of the population. Prior analyses, including one from the Department of Justice, found similar disparities in Tampa and Chicago. By removing one pretext for police interaction, SB 826 will make streets safer and more inviting to cyclists of color.

Please provide a Favorable committee report on SB 826 and support its passage in the Senate and General Assembly. Thank you for considering my comments.



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