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WASHINGTON REGIONAL ALCOHOL PROGRAM

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January 23, 2024

Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee
Maryland Senate
Annapolis, Maryland

Re.: Support of "Criminal Law – Manslaughter by Vehicle or Vessel – Increased Penalties," Senate Bill 26, Senator Bailey (R-Calvert & St. Mary's Counties)

"Maryland will likely surpass 600 roadway fatalities in 2023, the most the state has seen since 2007."

– Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration, "Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration Releases Annual Resolutions to Help Marylanders be Road Ready in 2024," December 28, 2023

Dear Senators:

On behalf of the Maryland nonprofit Washington Regional Alcohol Program's (WRAP) Board of Directors, staff, volunteers and the more than six-million Maryland residents we serve in the fight against drunk driving and underage drinking (including having served as project director of both Maryland's Checkpoint Strikeforce campaign and "Maryland Remembers" ceremony), I wanted to formally communicate to you **WRAP's unequivocal support for Senate Bill 26, "Criminal Law – Manslaughter by Vehicle or Vessel – Increased Penalties,"** Senator Bailey (R-Calvert & St. Mary's Counties).

Succinctly, Senate Bill 26 – in an effort to counter existing Maryland sentencing guidelines for vehicular manslaughter which result in ineffectual, remarkably low imprisonment sentences -- increases the "maximum periods of imprisonment" for persons convicted of vehicular manslaughter including for those convicted of such and having been previously convicted of a number of crimes including driving under the influence of alcohol, driving while impaired by alcohol or driving while impaired by drugs or controlled dangerous substances (Maryland Transportation Section 21-902 [a][b][c] & [d]).

(over)

A coalition of diverse interests using effective education, innovative programs and targeted advocacy to end alcohol-impaired driving and underage drinking in the Washington, DC metro area.

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As Maryland bore witness to an increasing number of traffic deaths in both 2022 and last year (Maryland Highway Safety Office/MVA) – and that over a quarter of Maryland's roadway fatalities *still* involve drunk drivers (MVA, 2022) – a meaningful deterrent and penalty for drivers controlling a vehicle in a “grossly negligent manner” which results in death of another is both paramount and overdue.

As a means of better equating the sentence with the *lethal* crime, WRAP supports Senate Bill 26 and urges your consideration of favorably reporting said legislation.

□□□□

Thank you, in advance, for your consideration. I may be directly reached with any questions at either 703-893-0461 or at kurt@wrap.org.

Cordially,



Kurt Gregory Erickson
President