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SPEAKER PRO TEM
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Environment and Transportation
Committee

Subcommittees

Chair, Environment

Natural Resources,
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The Maryland House of Delegates ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Delegate Dana Stein’s Testimony in Support of

HB 234 Vehicle Laws-Injury or Death of a Vulnerable Individual - Penalties

Four years ago, we passed increased protections for what we defined as vulnerable road users - pedestrians, cyclists, wheelchair users, a parent pushing a stroller, a highway worker. These road users are all of us, and are particularly vulnerable to being hit, injured or killed by drivers.

Our 2021 legislation increased fines and added other civil penalties for when a driver seriously injures or kills a vulnerable road user.

Last year, then-Del. Love introduced, and we passed, a bill that added a penalty of up to 60 days (2 months) jail time for injuring or killing someone lawfully riding a bike, EPAMD, or motor scooter in a bike lane or shoulder. Her bill, HB337, was named for a bicyclist who had been hit and killed by a truck while riding on a bike path: “Sara Debbink Langenkamp Memorial Act.” The purpose of that bill was to send a message to motorists that Maryland was taking traffic crashes involving cyclists seriously.

This year, we want the message to be that accidents involving any vulnerable road user will be taken seriously. The bill makes the possibility of up to 2 months jail time apply to any motorist injuring or killing a vulnerable road user lawfully in the road: whether in a crosswalk, sidewalk or footpath, working along a highway, etc., we’re saying to motorists that these areas of the road are protected spaces and the people entering or in them deserve to be protected.

A recent article in the *Baltimore Banner* was headlined: “Maryland road fatalities decreased in 2024, but number is still ‘ridiculously high’.” According to statistics kept by the Maryland Highway Safety Office, total lives lost in traffic accidents declined from 621 in 2023 to 573 in 2024, while the deaths of pedestrians and bicyclists remained about the same (158 pedestrians and 15 bicyclists in 2023; 156 pedestrians and 9 bicyclists in 2024).

Five years ago, we set a goal of reaching zero deaths on the state’s roads by 2030, and required Maryland Department of Transportation agencies to focus on efforts that would make Maryland’s roads safer. Yet, according to MDOT’s “2025 Vision Zero” report to the Governor and General Assembly, driver behaviors—including speeding and impaired driving—are the main factors behind road fatalities.

That is why this bill, and the additional penalty of incarceration, is necessary: We need to change driver behavior if we really want to protect those most vulnerable on our roads—pedestrians, cyclists, wheelchair users, those with disabilities, first responders, roadworkers—each of us when we are in a crosswalk, bike lane or shoulder.

I urge a favorable report on HB 234.