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Judicial Proceedings Committee
Executive Nominations Committee

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Senate Bill 397 – Vehicle Laws – Protective Headgear Requirement for Motorcycle Rides – Exception (In
Remembrance of Gary “Pappy” Boward)

February 18, 2024

Dear Chairman Smith, Vice Chairman Waldstreicher, and Members of the Committee,

Senate Bill 397 exempts individuals from the requirement of wearing helmets or other protective headgear if they meet any of three criteria. They must be an individual 21 years of age or older and either: have been licensed to drive a motorcycle for two years, completed a motorcycle safety course that has been approved by the State of Maryland, or is a passenger on a motorcycle being driven by an individual already meeting the previously mentioned criteria.

The AMA (American Motorcyclists Association) and ABATE of Maryland, Inc fully support this piece of legislation. Mandatory helmet laws do not prevent crashes as much as we wish them to. A helmet alone is not sufficient to prevent injuries. Other measures such as better education to improve the skills of motorcyclists reduce accidents much more than just safety equipment. I do believe that as adults we can make proper safety decisions.

In Pennsylvania, there is Freedom of Choice law regarding helmet usage. Of the 372,000 registered motorcyclists, 2021 saw just 3,580 total motorcycle crashes. That is exactly .96% of registered motorcycles. In contrast Mississippi, is a mandatory helmet state and they have the highest death rate of

motorcyclists in the country with 12 per 10,000. This only shows that it does not matter whether safety is legislated or not, but whether personal responsibility is taken.

Thank you very much and I ask for a favorable report.

Sincerely,

Senator Mike McKay

Representing the Appalachia Region of Maryland

Garrett, Allegany, and Washington Counties