

DANA M. STEIN
Legislative District 11B
Baltimore County

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SPEAKER PRO TEM
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Environment and Transportation
Committee

Subcommittees

Chair, Environment

Natural Resources,
Agriculture and Open Space



The Maryland House of Delegates
6 Bladen Street, Room 301
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3527 · 301-858-3527
800-492-7122 Ext. 3527
Dana.Stein@house.state.md.us

The Maryland House of Delegates
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Delegate Dana Stein Testimony in Support of
HB 1375 – Vehicle Equipment-Portable Variable Messaging Signs-Authorization**

HB 1375 would allow tow trucks to display portable variable messaging signs (VMS) while at the scene of a crash or a disabled vehicle. The use of these signs will be regulated by the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) and will conform to the manual on uniform traffic control devices adopted by the State Highway Administration (SHA). These signs will display vital traffic safety information, such as arrows or warnings about hazardous conditions ahead, and will only be activated when the tow truck is stationary so the signs will not confuse passing drivers. The use of VMS will be a clear and effective way to alert drivers to the presence of a tow truck and any potential dangers on the road.

The need for this measure is supported by research done by the AAA Foundation. Between 2015 and 2021, 123 roadside assistance providers were killed by passing vehicles. Of these fatalities, 89% occurred in areas with speed limits of 55 mph or higher, and 84% occurred in good weather conditions. These statistics emphasize the real and present dangers faced by roadside workers every day.

VMS have already proven to be effective in improving safety when used by state agencies. By extending this technology to tow trucks, we can help reduce the risks faced by tow truck drivers and roadside workers and make roads safer for motorists. This signage will also play a crucial role in promoting compliance with Maryland's Move Over laws which are designed to protect individuals working on or near roadways.

While Move Over laws are in place across all 50 states, data reveals that many drivers are either unaware of these laws or underestimate the risks posed to roadside workers.

- 42% of drivers who do not comply with Move Over laws believe their behavior is not dangerous to roadside workers.
- 23% are unaware of the law in their state.

- A 2021 poll found that 32% of Maryland drivers and 57% of Washington, D.C., drivers were either unsure or unaware that the Move Over law exists in their jurisdictions.

By authorizing the use of portable VMS on tow trucks, this bill will make sure every driver is aware of these laws. These signs will serve as visible reminders to drivers to slow down and move over when they encounter roadside workers, which will improve the safety of Marylanders.