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Baltimore County

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Budget and Taxation Committee

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Capital Budget
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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
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TESTIMONY OF SENATOR SHELLY HETTLEMAN
SB 915 - BALTIMORE COUNTY – VEHICLE LAWS – PRIVATE ROADWAYS IN
RESIDENTIAL SUBDIVISIONS AND COMMUNITIES

SB 915 is a bill that addresses a critical gap in traffic enforcement and public safety on private roadways within residential subdivisions and communities in Baltimore County. This authority already exists in Calvert County – it would allow police officers in Baltimore County to enforce Maryland’s vehicle laws on private roads in residential areas, ensuring that residents, pedestrians, and families can feel safe in their own neighborhoods.

Under current law, unless a private roadway is specifically open to the public, police officers have limited authority to enforce traffic laws in these areas. This has led to situations where speeding, reckless driving, and other dangerous behaviors go unchecked and unpunished simply because they occur on privately owned roads within a HOA residential community. These roadways are still used by residents, children, and visitors like any other roadway in the state. Clearly, the risks posed by irresponsible driving are no different from those on public roads.

SB 915 directly corrects this oversight in law by explicitly allowing law enforcement officers in Baltimore County to enforce traffic laws in residential subdivisions and communities, just as they do in Calvert County. This change will help reduce speeding, prevent reckless driving, and ensure that all motorists are held accountable for violations, regardless of whether a road is publicly or privately maintained.

In light of concerns expressed by Baltimore County because of its high number of private roadways, we are proposing agreed-upon amendments that would create a pilot program in the one neighborhood that has come to our delegation with their concerns. The Baltimore County Executive supports this approach as does the Baltimore County Senate delegation who voted unanimously for the bill.

By closing this enforcement gap, SB 915 strengthens traffic safety, pedestrian protections, peace of mind, and overall quality of life for Baltimore County residents. I urge a favorable report to ensure that Baltimore County communities, regardless of roadway ownership, have the same level of protection from dangerous driving.

