

8111 Thoreau Drive  
Bethesda, MD 20817  
March 3, 2025

The Honorable Will Smith  
Judicial Proceedings Committee  
2 East, Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: SB 0949

Honorable Chair Smith and Members of the Committee,

I am a Past President of the nonprofit Maryland Consumer Rights Coalition (now Economic Action MD), but the views expressed in this letter opposing SB 0949 are solely my own. Yet as a Maryland resident who drives and walks a dog daily, these views represent those of the majority of Marylanders concerned with their and the public's safety. Per the AAA's latest survey released just **one week ago**, only 13% of the public trust them, while 61% remain afraid or unsure (26%).<sup>1</sup>

All of us – especially 76 year old seniors like me – look forward to the day when autonomous vehicles can safely operate on our streets and highways. We fear the dreaded talk: “Grandpa, it’s time to discuss taking away your car keys.” But neither Grandma nor I would willingly put our lives at risk now, or endanger nearby pedestrians or motorists, by relying on unproven driverless car technology that so clearly is not yet ready for prime time – when the risk of misplaced trust can mean death or catastrophic injury.

Look at the experiences of places where driverless cars have been allowed. Take the horrific reporting on deaths and injuries just with Tesla vehicles operating under its Autopilot or Full Self Driving mode.<sup>2</sup> There’s the video of a self-described “tech guy” in January 2025 whose driverless Waymo car in Arizona kept taking him around in circles; he was trapped, with no way to exit the car.<sup>3</sup> School crossing guards in San Francisco scared parents everywhere by reporting many “close calls” with driverless cars.<sup>4</sup> Driverless cars

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<sup>1</sup> [https://newsroom.aaa.com/2025/02/aaa-fear-in-self-driving-vehicles-persists/#:~:text=ORLANDO%2C%20FL%20\(Feb.%2025,in%20a%20self%2Ddriving%20vehicle](https://newsroom.aaa.com/2025/02/aaa-fear-in-self-driving-vehicles-persists/#:~:text=ORLANDO%2C%20FL%20(Feb.%2025,in%20a%20self%2Ddriving%20vehicle)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.tesladeaths.com/>, cited in this extensive Wikipedia compendium: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_Tesla\\_Autopilot\\_crashes#GaoYaning](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Tesla_Autopilot_crashes#GaoYaning)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5EMs13Gk7Q8>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.nbcbayarea.com/investigations/school-crossing-guards-driverless-cars-close-calls/3544306/>

have blocked many intersections;<sup>5</sup> driverless cars have driven the wrong way down a street toward oncoming traffic.<sup>6</sup> A female rider was trapped in a driverless car when guys wanting her phone number refused to move.<sup>7</sup> Driverless cars have struck pedestrians and bicyclists.<sup>8</sup> The list goes on and on.

As elected representatives, you and your colleagues may be taking a career threatening risk should this bill pass. We all know the media loves to cover incidents involving driverless vehicles (and these days, incidents increasingly are caught on video). And when accidents inevitably begin with driverless cars in Maryland, outraged citizens will want to know who let these cars on our streets. As reporters dig into these stories in Maryland, your constituents will be shocked if they discover YOU voted to allow driverless cars on our streets **knowing** that neither the federal government nor the state of Maryland first required each of these companies demonstrate their vehicles operate reliability and safely without a licensed human behind the wheel. You can and must insist that these companies **actually prove their vehicles can be driven reliably and safely** before they are allowed on our roads.

While companies pooh-pooh real-life problems, can they really be trusted when, under SB 0949, they merely have to “self-certify” their vehicles meet the definitions and conditions of the bill? Take, for example, the company fined \$500,000 for not telling the truth about an incident in which its driverless car dragged a woman underneath it.<sup>9</sup> Their obvious financial interests and the indisputable long history of their past vehicle malfunctions (contradicting their glowing assurances of safety) substantially undermine their credibility. The public has not been blinded by their repeatedly broken promises; let’s hope the members of this Committee realize more has to be done to protect us before unproven vehicles are allowed to endanger defenseless pedestrians, bicyclists and drivers in Maryland.

I ask you to stand up for safety and for your constituents. Please give an unfavorable report on SB 0949. Driverless vehicles are not yet ready for prime time, but I hope their day will come.

Sincerely,

Mark Steinbach

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<sup>5</sup> Google “driverless cars block intersections” including in Houston, Austin and San Francisco

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JUCUBK6cqVg>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.sfchronicle.com/bayarea/article/men-stop-waymo-sf-woman-passenger-video-19808703.php>

<sup>8</sup> Google “driverless cars hit pedestrians” and “driverless cars hit bicyclists”

<sup>9</sup> <https://abc7news.com/post/cruise-pay-500k-fine-lying-driverless-car-dragging-woman-2023-crash/15548339/>

