

SB 485, Support

Ronald Weiss, Fort Washington

I support SB 485 that would implement a tiered fine structure for speed camera violations on MD 210, a dangerous stretch of road where 95 lives have been tragically lost in the last 17 years. As a concerned citizen and founding member of the MD 210 Traffic Safety Committee who has worked for 7 years to save lives on MD 210, I believe this legislation is a critical step toward improving safety and saving lives on this high-risk roadway.

Since 2009, the state has enforced a flat \$40 fine for speed camera violations, regardless of how fast a driver exceeds the speed limit. While this fine may be an adequate deterrent for minor infractions, it fails to address the more serious and reckless behavior of drivers who are grossly exceeding the speed limit, sometimes reaching speeds of 100 mph or more. The flat fine does little to discourage these extreme speeders, who present the greatest danger to other motorists and pedestrians.

A tiered fine structure would ensure that penalties are proportionate to the severity of the violation. By imposing higher fines on drivers who far exceed the speed limit, the law would send a stronger message to those engaging in dangerous speeding, while still maintaining fairness for those committing lesser infractions. This approach would create a more effective deterrent, encouraging safer driving behaviors and reducing the risk of future fatalities on this hazardous stretch of road.

Speed cameras have already proven their worth in many areas by reducing speeding and preventing accidents. However, without the proper enforcement mechanisms, their impact is limited. A stronger penalty structure is necessary to address those drivers who ignore the current \$40 fine and continue to put lives at risk by speeding excessively.

This bill has the same tiered fines (\$60 - \$500) as in the Maryland Road Worker Protection Act sponsored by Lt. Governor Miller for an unoccupied work zone.

By supporting this bill, you would help protect the lives of everyone who uses this MD 210 and prevent more families from experiencing the devastating loss of a loved one. We have the tools to make this road safer, and with your help, we can ensure that they are used effectively.

Results from the new MD 210 speed cameras indicate that there are **on average 348 vehicles being cited for travelling 67 MPH or more on MD 210. One vehicle was clocked at an outrageous 190 MPH:**

Citation statistics for over five months of operation of the new cameras show that the cameras are effective in slowing traffic. Citations have gone down 72% from nearly 17,000 in August 2024 down to about 4,700 in December.

However, the same 5-month statistics also show that the current fixed \$40 fine does not deter drivers who drive to speed. Nearly 16,000 vehicles speed at 71 MPH or more during the five months. That is over 100 vehicles per day. MD 210 averages more than 2 vehicles per day speeding at 95 MPH or more.

Answers to some questions about the bill:

1. SB 485 does not have additional fines for repeat offenders.
2. Funds from uncontested citations, over and above those needed to operate the 6 MD 210 speed cameras, are required by law to go to SHA to be used to improve MD 210 safety.
3. To date, the MD 210 speed camera fines sent to SHA in accordance with the law total \$1,321,606.53. They have been used to:
  - a. Install flex posts to prevent illegal shoulder use for left turns at MD 228 (Berry Road) and MD 210.
  - b. Install **advanced hazard beacons** at intersections to alert drivers of approaching signals.
  - c. Upgrade traffic signals at key intersections, including MD 228, MD 373, and Fort Washington Road.
  - d. Enhance pedestrian safety features, including new crossings, countdown pedestrian signals, and accessibility improvements.
4. Complete a \$130 million interchange project at MD 210 and Kerby Hill Road, part of a broader corridor-wide safety initiative.

MD 210 was designed to quickly move munitions between DC and Indian Head. Low-cost physical efforts to slow traffic have been tested and have been found to be ineffective. Major physical changes to encourage slower speeds are very expensive, not currently affordable, and take many years. Officer enforcement is occasional and has been reduced because of short staffing. As a result, speed cameras are the primary enforcement on MD 210.
5. Over the past 17 years 95 people have died on MD 210. The current \$40 fine has not deterred over 300 drivers per day from speeding at 67 MPH or more on MD 210. One driver has been clocked at 190 MPH. HB 349 will protect MD 210 users with the same fine structure as the Maryland Road Worker Protection Act has for Maryland vacant work zones: \$60 - \$500.
6. Speed camera citations can be contested in court. Speed camera citations (see the attachment) include this language: "Therefore, under Maryland State Law, Transportation Article § 21-809, as the registered owner(s) or lessee (six months or more) you are liable for the violation. **Unless you elect to go to court**, a civil penalty in the amount of \$40.00 must be paid by the due date shown on this notice."

I sincerely hope you will support life-saving legislation - SB 485.

Please feel free to contact me if you would like further information or if I can assist in any way.