



**PLEASE SUPPORT
SB 0613**

“Montgomery County and Prince
George’s County – Distracted Driving
3 Monitoring System Pilot Program”

MARYLAND COALITION FOR ROADWAY SAFETY, INC.

URGES MD SENATE JPR COMMITTEE SUPPORT FOR SB 0613

February 11, 2025

TO:

Honorable Senator William C. Smith, Chair
Honorable Senator Jeff Waldstreicher, Vice Chair
Judicial Proceedings Committee
Maryland General Assembly
2 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

FROM:

John Seng, Chair
SafeRoadsMD - Maryland Coalition for Roadway Safety, Inc.
(202) 468-7682, JSeng@SafeRoadsMD.org
SafeRoadsMD.org

Subject: Urgent Need for Distracted Driving Enforcement – Support SB 0613

Dear Sen. Smith, Sen. Waldstreicher and Members of the Maryland Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee:

The Maryland Coalition for Roadway Safety (SafeRoadsMD) urges your support for SB 0613 - “Montgomery County and Prince George’s County – Distracted Driving 3 Monitoring System Pilot Program.” We thank Sen. Waldstreicher and Sen. Jackson for crafting and co-sponsoring the bill.

The Crisis: Distracted Driving Kills More Marylanders Than Any Other Factor

Despite existing laws prohibiting handheld phone use while driving, enforcement remains a significant challenge, leaving our roads unsafe for all. The **Maryland Department of Transportation (2023)** confirms that distracted driving is now the leading cause of crashes and fatalities in our state, annually accounting for:

- **203 deaths**—34% of all traffic fatalities and
- **50,000 crashes**—a staggering 46% of all reported accidents.

On a national level, the **National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA)** recently reported that distracted driving fatalities run far higher than previously estimated, likely exceeding **10,000 deaths per year**—nearly **29% of all traffic fatalities**.

Maryland Coalition for Roadway Safety, Inc.
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Marylanders Recognize the Danger

A vast majority of drivers—**more than 95%**—agree that texting or reading messages while driving is “very or extremely dangerous” (AAA). Scientific research supports this concern:

- A distracted driver’s impairment is **comparable to having a .08 BAC level** (University of Utah).
- **Texting while driving increases crash risk by 23 times** (Virginia Tech Transportation Institute).
- A **single text message** takes a driver’s eyes off the road for **10 seconds**, enough to travel almost **two city blocks at 35 mph** without looking up.

The Problem: Lack of Enforcement Allows Distracted Driving to Thrive

Despite Maryland’s existing hands-free law, enforcement has been ineffective due to resource constraints. Most police departments lack the staff resources to enforce against distracted driving.

- Recent studies found that **20-30% of drivers** in Montgomery and Prince George’s Counties were using their phones while driving, translating to thousands of daily violations.



Allstate Insurance

Nationwide research supports these findings. An analysis of **570 million trips by 3 million drivers** showed that phone use occurs during **88 out of every 100 trips**. These numbers reveal an undeniable reality: Distracted driving is an epidemic, and our current approach to enforcement is failing.

The Solution: A Fair, Privacy-Protected Enforcement System

SB 0613 and its companion HB908 propose a pilot program in **Montgomery and Prince George’s Counties** that will deploy **automated enforcement technology** to detect handheld phone use while driving - in other words, to enforce the law.

- This technology allows for fair, impartial, privacy-conscious detection of distracted driving while ensuring no personal identification is compromised.
- **A \$40 citation**, similar to existing automated enforcement programs (e.g., speed cameras), is issued to the vehicle owner.
- **Evidence includes:**
 - A **black-and-white anonymized image** (protecting driver identity).
 - **Video of the violation** to confirm phone use.
 - A **clear image of the license plate** for citation processing.

The Impact: Safer Roads and Stronger Accountability

Automated enforcement has **proven to reduce unsafe behaviors by over 70%** in other traffic enforcement programs. Additionally, past legislative bans on texting led to a **4% reduction in traffic-related ER visits nationwide**—a number that would only grow with **effective enforcement**.

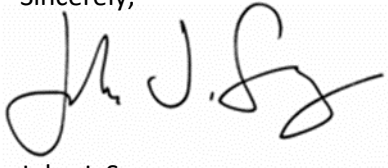
A Call to Action: Protecting Future Generations

Distracted driving is not just an individual risk—it's a behavior that gets passed down. Research shows that children of distracted drivers are **twice as likely** to drive distracted themselves (National Safety Council).

By supporting **SB 0613**, members of the Maryland Senate JPR have the power to **make Maryland's roads safer for everyone**—including our children, pedestrians, cyclists, and responsible drivers. We finally have the technology to **enforce the law fairly, effectively, and with minimal intrusion**. Let's use it before more lives are needlessly lost.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We look forward to your leadership to stem the bloodshed caused by distracted driving.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John J. Seng". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "John" being the most prominent.

John J. Seng
Chair

Maryland Coalition for Roadway Safety, Inc.

cc: Rev. Dr. R. Screen, R. Weiss - Route 210 Safety Committee; SafeRoadsMD Board