

February 12, 2025

Chair Smith and Members:

I write to express my strong support for SB 0627, Safety Yield legislation, introduced by Chairman Smith.

As a regular bike rider and longtime bike commuter, I'm frequently on roads throughout Maryland, most often in Montgomery and Frederick counties. Stopping at stop signs can be a very unsettling experience, even with a bike lane or shoulder, because cars are often in a hurry and don't always even come to a complete stop. Cars that turn right sometimes do so directly into the path of the bike lane or shoulder without giving the bike rider, who is going straight, the right of way, which is required by law. This leads to close calls or, in the worst case, a crash involving a vulnerable road user.

The safety yield allows the bike rider to observe the intersection and, only if safe, proceed through the stop sign. By permitting the bike rider to maintain forward momentum, the safety yield makes it easier for drivers to see cyclists. And cyclists are able to proceed through intersections more quickly. For many people on bikes, the first few pedal strokes from a complete stop can be slow and wobbly which increases risk to the bike rider. This law would not negate a bicyclist's responsibility to yield to other traffic or pedestrians before crossing an intersection.

The District of Columbia has recently implemented the safety yield. For those of us riding in that jurisdiction, we have experienced, for the first time, a much safer feeling when approaching stop signs. No wonder that the National Highway Transit Safety Administration (NHTSA) has said the following about the safety yield:

"A safe transportation system makes people the priority. Working together to enhance bicycle safety by preventing and eliminating crashes that lead to serious injuries and fatalities is more important now than ever. Many States have enacted bicyclist stop-as-yield laws to enhance safety and protect cyclists. Based upon the current research and data available, these laws showed added safety benefits for bicyclists in States where they were evaluated, and may positively affect the environment, traffic, and transportation."

Similar legislation was approved by the House of Delegates in 2024 by a 119-13 margin and once again overwhelmingly approved by the House Environment and Transportation Committee last month. I urge the Committee to support this bill.

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