

SARA N. LOVE  
Legislative District 16  
Montgomery County

Judicial Proceedings Committee



James Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street, Room 222  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
410-841-3124 · 301-858-3124  
800-492-7122 Ext. 3124  
Sara.Love@senate.state.md.us

## THE SENATE OF MARYLAND ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

### **SB 385 – Vehicle Laws – Injury or Death of Vulnerable Individual - Penalties**

Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, colleagues on JPR.

According to the Maryland Department of Transportation, in 2024, 152 vulnerable road users were killed on Maryland roadways<sup>1</sup>. The good news is that this number is down from 173 fatalities in 2023.<sup>2</sup> The bad news is that the 2024 statistic is still 152 too many, particularly as Maryland strives toward a Vision Zero goal of eliminating traffic fatalities and serious injuries by 2030.

SB 385 seeks to build upon prior legislation aimed at reducing the number of vulnerable road user injuries and deaths. It takes the next step in providing a deterrent for certain motorist behaviors by imposing the same stricter penalty on those convicted of causing injury or death to any vulnerable road user as for striking a cyclist in a bike lane: a sentence of up to two months in jail and/or a fine of as much as \$2,000.

Why is SB 385 so important? As defined in 2021 legislation sponsored by Vice Chair Waldstreicher and my crossfile on this bill Delegate Stein, vulnerable road users are all of us: pedestrians, cyclists, wheelchair users, those with a disability, first responders, and roadworkers – essentially anyone lawfully outside of a car on a roadway. Importantly, the bill also filled a gap in law for drivers convicted of seriously injuring or killing a vulnerable road user by establishing penalties that include a fine of up to \$2,000 (Transp. §21-901.3).

Last year, prompted by the inadequate maximum penalty allowed for the truck driver convicted of causing my constituent's tragic and fatal bike crash, I sponsored the Sarah Debbink Langenkamp Memorial Act. To send the clear message that Maryland takes traffic crashes involving cyclists seriously, this legislation set a stricter penalty including up to two months of jail time (aligning with Transp. §21-502) and/or a fine of up to \$2,000 (aligning with Transp. §21-901.3 discussed above.)

By extending the same maximum penalty for drivers convicted of striking a biker in a bike lane to all vulnerable road user crashes, SB 385 is the next logical step in encouraging safer driving, preventing deaths, and continuing to make progress toward our Vision Zero goal. For these reasons, I respectfully request your favorable report on SB 385.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://zerodeathsmd.gov/>

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