

**2025\_2\_17 Favorable SB710.pdf**

Uploaded by: Dawn Luedtke

Position: FAV



**MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL**  
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

DAWN LUEDTKE  
COUNCILMEMBER  
DISTRICT 7

February 17, 2025

The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr.  
Chair, Judicial Proceedings Committee  
2 East Miller  
Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: Senate Bill 710, *Criminal Law - Motor Vehicle or Vessel - Criminal Negligence*

Dear Chair Smith,

I urge the Committee to support Senate Bill 710 - Motor Vehicle or Vessel - Criminal Negligence, which would bridge a gap in existing criminal and vehicular law by allowing an individual to face a misdemeanor criminal negligence charge for driving in a criminally negligent manner. The bill does not alter or amend the existing definition of criminally negligent manner, which provides as follows:

- (c) For the purpose of this section, a person acts in a criminally negligent manner with respect to a result or a circumstance when:*
- (1) the person should be aware, but fails to perceive, that the person's conduct creates a substantial and unjustifiable risk that such a result will occur; and*
  - (2) the failure to perceive constitutes a gross deviation from the standard of care that would be exercised by a reasonable person.*

Md. Code Ann., Crim. Law Art. §3-212.1(c).

In its present form, Maryland's criminal code only allows a charge of criminal negligence where serious bodily injury or death has occurred. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, we have seen a rise in more egregious driving behavior that puts motorists, pedestrians, and cyclists at increased risk of serious bodily injury or death and heightens anxiety on our roadways. Habitually negligent drivers feel emboldened by the lack of consequences under Maryland law for their conduct. If we want to achieve our Vision Zero goals and do our best to protect all users of Maryland's roadways, we need to close the gaps in our existing laws and provide our public

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[www.montgomerycountymd.gov](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov)

safety professionals and the judiciary with appropriate tools to both correct the behavior and provide an appropriate consequence. And we need protective legal tools that allow us to do that when criminally negligent driving occurs and before someone has experienced serious bodily injury or death.

I respectfully request the committee issue a favorable report on Senate Bill 710.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dawn Luedtke". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Dawn Luedtke  
Montgomery County Councilmember  
District 7

cc: Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee

# SafeRoadsMD Supports HB 883.pdf

Uploaded by: John Seng

Position: FAV



**PLEASE SUPPORT  
HB 883**  
“Criminal Law – Motor Vehicle or Vessel  
– Criminal Negligence”

**MARYLAND COALITION FOR ROADWAY SAFETY, INC.  
URGES MD HOUSE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE SUPPORT FOR HB 883**

February 17, 2025

TO:

Delegate Luke Clippinger, Chair  
Delegate J. Sandy Bartlett, Vice Chair  
House Judiciary Committee  
Maryland General Assembly  
100 Taylor House Office Building  
101 Taylor House Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

FROM:

John Seng, Chair  
SafeRoadsMD - Maryland Coalition for Roadway Safety, Inc.  
(202) 468-7682, [JSeng@SafeRoadsMD.org](mailto:JSeng@SafeRoadsMD.org)  
[SafeRoadsMD.org](http://SafeRoadsMD.org)

**RE: Urgent Support for HB 883 – Criminal Law – Motor Vehicle or Vessel – Criminal Negligence**

Dear Chair Clippinger, Co-Chair Bartlett and esteemed members of the House Judiciary Committee.

I am writing to express my **strong and urgent support** for House Bill 883, which would prohibit individuals from driving, operating, or controlling a motor vehicle or vessel in a criminally negligent manner.

As road fatalities and reckless driving incidents continue to plague Maryland communities, we must decisively take legislative action to more effectively hold offenders accountable and protect the people of Maryland.

The need for this legislation is undeniable. HB 883 was introduced in view of the tragic and preventable egregiously, criminally aggressive driving crash in 2023 that gravely injured Montgomery County Police Sergeant Patrick Kepp.



Sgt. Patrick Kepp's prosthetic legs (WUSA9)

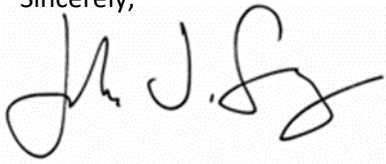
Under HB 883, individuals who drive with reckless disregard for the safety of others could face up to six months in prison or a \$5,000 fine, with stricter penalties for causing life-threatening injuries. This is a necessary and measured response to the devastating consequences of criminal negligence on our roads. Holding drivers accountable for grossly irresponsible behavior is not just about punishment—it is about **deterrence, prevention, and saving lives.**

Current Maryland laws fail to distinguish between minor negligence and the kind of egregious recklessness that endangers lives daily. HB 883 closes this dangerous gap, ensuring that those who treat our roads as lawless zones face real consequences. **No family should have to suffer the loss of a loved one because our laws were too weak to address the growing crisis of dangerous driving.**

As the House Judiciary Committee considers this critical bill on February 19, I urge you to **prioritize public safety and vote in favor of HB 883.** Maryland's residents deserve safer roads, and this bill is a crucial step toward achieving that goal. I appreciate your time and dedication to protecting our communities and strongly encourage your support of this essential legislation.

Thank you for your leadership on this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John J. Seng", is written over a light gray grid background.

John J. Seng  
Chair  
Maryland Coalition for Roadway Safety, Inc.

cc: SafeRoadsMD Board, S. Morningstar - Montgomery County Office of Intergovernmental Relations

# **SB 710 Support Letter.pdf**

Uploaded by: Omar Masood

Position: FAV



February 17, 2025

The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr., Chair  
The Honorable Jeff Waldstreicher, Vice Chair  
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee  
Maryland General Assembly  
6 Bladen Street  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Chair Smith and Vice Chair Waldstreicher:

Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety (Advocates), an alliance of consumer, safety, medical, public health and law enforcement groups and insurance companies working together to pass highway and auto safety laws that prevent crashes, save lives, reduce injuries, and contain costs, supports enactment of Senate Bill (SB) 710/House Bill (HB) 883. This legislation will improve safety by prohibiting criminally negligent driving to curb its deadly and damaging incidence and impact.

In 2023, there were an estimated 610<sup>i</sup> traffic fatalities in the state, which represents a 31 percent increase since 2013, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA).<sup>ii</sup> Moreover, state data show there were approximately 28,600 injury crashes and 110,400 total crashes in 2023.<sup>iii</sup>

In addition to being tragic and devastating to Marylanders, first responders and visitors, motor vehicle crashes are costly. Maryland incurred \$5.9 billion in economic harm, which is equivalent to \$977 per resident, due to motor vehicle crashes according to a 2019 analysis.<sup>iv</sup> When updated for inflation alone, in 2025, costs would equate to \$7.46 billion to the state and \$1,233 per resident.<sup>v</sup> Clearly, traffic safety is a serious issue that urgently needs improvement.

SB 710/HB 883 is a sensible way to make Maryland safer by holding the most dangerous drivers accountable. We urge you to advance SB 710/HB 883.

Sincerely,

Catherine Chase, President

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<sup>i</sup> Traffic Safety Facts: Crash Stats, Early Estimate of Motor Vehicle Traffic Fatalities in 2023, NHTSA, April 2024, DOT HS 813 561, available at <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813561>.

<sup>ii</sup> State Traffic Safety Information for Maryland (2022), NHTSA, available at <https://cdan.dot.gov/STSI/stsi.htm>.

<sup>iii</sup> Statewide Crash Summary Report (2023), Maryland Department of Transportation available at: <https://zerodeathsmd.gov/resources/crashdata/>.

<sup>iv</sup> The Economic and Societal Impact of Motor Vehicle Crashes, 2019, NHTSA, Feb. 2023, DOT HS 813 403, available at <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813403>.

<sup>v</sup> CPI Inflation Calculator, BLS, January 2019 to January 2025 dollars, available at <https://data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/cpicalc.pl>.



**SB 710 - MoCo\_Morningstar\_FAV (GA 25).pdf**

Uploaded by: Sara Morningstar

Position: FAV



# Montgomery County

## Office of Intergovernmental Relations

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ANNAPOLIS: 240-777-8270

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**SB 710**

**DATE: February 19, 2025**

**SPONSOR: Senator King**

**ASSIGNED TO: Judicial Proceedings Committee**

**CONTACT PERSON: Sara Morningstar (Sara.Morningstar@montgomerycountymd.gov)**

**POSITION: SUPPORT**

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### **Criminal Law – Motor Vehicle or Vessel – Criminal Negligence**

Senate Bill 710 would prohibit a person from driving, operating, or controlling a motor vehicle or vessel in a criminally negligent manner. Montgomery County supports the bill.

In October of 2023, Montgomery County Police Sgt. Patrick Kepp was seriously injured after being struck on I-270 by a reckless and aggressive driver who had repeatedly engaged in dangerous driving, including incidents where he operated his car at speeds well over 130 miles per hour. The Montgomery County Department of Police was familiar with the teenage driver. He had been issued multiple citations, but he continued to engage in aggressive driving. In the early morning hours of October 18<sup>th</sup>, after receiving another report of dangerous driving by the notorious teen, Sgt. Kepp responded to the incident by driving to the section of I-270 where the car had been headed and deployed stop sticks in the road to deflate the driver's tires. Instead of the driver slowing down to prevent a crash, he drove into Sgt. Kepp causing the police officer to sustain crushing injuries to his legs resulting in necessary amputation. The driver has been charged with attempted first-degree murder, first-degree assault, and causing life-threatening injuries to Sgt. Kepp.

The vehicle that struck Sgt. Kepp was being intentionally driven in a negligent manner. Because current law addresses the criminally negligent operation of a motor vehicle that *results* in serious bodily injury or death – and not criminally negligent conduct involving the operation of a vehicle *before* someone is seriously injured or dies – Senate Bill 710 creates a criminal law charge that would act as a deterrent to dangerous and aggressive driving. The driver's conduct would have to rise to the level of criminal negligence, but more important, the offender would be required to appear before a judge to address the behavior in a substantive manner. In doing so, the legislation aims to stop someone from engaging in negligent conduct *before* they harm or kill someone.

Montgomery County urges the Committee to adopt a favorable report on SB 710.

# **SB710-King-Sponsor Testimony.pdf**

Uploaded by: Senator Nancy King

Position: FWA

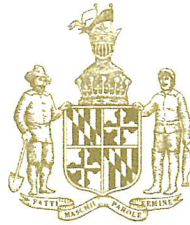
NANCY J. KING  
Legislative District 39  
Montgomery County

MAJORITY LEADER

Budget and Taxation Committee

*Chair*

Education, Business, and  
Administration Subcommittee



James Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street, Room 123  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
410-841-3686  
800-492-7122 Ext. 3686  
Nancy.King@senate.state.md.us

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Senate Bill 710 – Criminal Law – Motor Vehicle or Vessel – Criminal Negligence**

February 19, 2025

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee:

Preliminary motor vehicle data by Maryland State Police indicate the following 2024 statistics:

528 fatalities

29,203 accidents resulting in personal injuries

Drivers, pedestrians, cyclists and workers are all being put in harm's way by the actions of drivers who operate their motor vehicles with blatant disregard for public safety.

We need to address the behaviors that are resulting in deaths and injuries before these accidents occur. Under current law, there are penalties for causing a life-threatening injury to another as a result of the person's driving, operating, or controlling a motor vehicle or vessel in a criminally negligent manner. Senate Bill 710 will expand on that law by adding that a person may not drive, operate or control a motor vehicle or vessel in a criminally negligent manner, and adds penalties even if the criminally negligent conduct has not resulted in a life-threatening injury to another.

By adding this language to the law, people who act in a criminally negligent manner with their vehicles or vessels, will have to appear in court to address the behavior in a substantive way. If convicted of a violation of this section of the law, a person would be guilty of a misdemeanor and subject to imprisonment not exceeding 6 months or a fine not exceeding \$5000 or both.

People who disregard the rules of the road and operate their motor vehicles in a dangerous and deadly way need to be held accountable and when the conduct is so significantly harmful in and of itself, we should not have to wait until someone is seriously injured or killed to address the conduct.

And so, I respectfully request a favorable report on Senate Bill 710.