

Stein Senate Testimony HB 1375.pdf

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Committee

Subcommittees

Chair, Environment

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The Maryland House of Delegates
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**Delegate Dana Stein Testimony in Support of
HB 1375 – Vehicle Equipment-Portable Variable Messaging Signs-Authorization**

HB 1375 would allow tow trucks to display portable variable messaging signs (VMS) while at the scene of a crash or a disabled vehicle. The use of these signs will be regulated by the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) and will conform to the manual on uniform traffic control devices adopted by the State Highway Administration (SHA). These signs will display vital traffic safety information, such as arrows or warnings about hazardous conditions ahead, and will only be activated when the tow truck is stationary so the signs will not confuse passing drivers. The use of VMS will be a clear and effective way to alert drivers to the presence of a tow truck and any potential dangers on the road.

The need for this measure is supported by research done by the AAA Foundation. Between 2015 and 2021, 123 roadside assistance providers were killed by passing vehicles. Of these fatalities, 89% occurred in areas with speed limits of 55 mph or higher, and 84% occurred in good weather conditions. These statistics emphasize the real and present dangers faced by roadside workers every day.

VMS have already proven to be effective in improving safety when used by state agencies. By extending this technology to tow trucks, we can help reduce the risks faced by tow truck drivers and roadside workers and make roads safer for motorists. This signage will also play a crucial role in promoting compliance with Maryland's Move Over laws which are designed to protect individuals working on or near roadways.

While Move Over laws are in place across all 50 states, data reveals that many drivers are either unaware of these laws or underestimate the risks posed to roadside workers.

- 42% of drivers who do not comply with Move Over laws believe their behavior is not dangerous to roadside workers.
- 23% are unaware of the law in their state.

- A 2021 poll found that 32% of Maryland drivers and 57% of Washington, D.C., drivers were either unsure or unaware that the Move Over law exists in their jurisdictions.

By authorizing the use of portable VMS on tow trucks, this bill will make sure every driver is aware of these laws. These signs will serve as visible reminders to drivers to slow down and move over when they encounter roadside workers, which will improve the safety of Marylanders.

HB1375 - SHA - LOS - Vehicle Equipment - Portable

Uploaded by: Patricia Westervelt

Position: FAV

March 27, 2025

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

RE: Letter of Support – HB 1375 – Vehicle Equipment – Portable Variable Messaging Signs - Authorization

Dear Chair Smith and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) supports House Bill 1375 as a tool to enhance the safety of motorists, first responders, and tow truck drivers on our roadways.

HB 1375 authorizes tow trucks to display a portable changeable messaging sign (PCMS) while assisting with a crash or disabled vehicle on a highway. The signs would be securely mounted on tow trucks and conform to standards established by the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD). The signs would only display messages pre-approved by the State Highway Administration (SHA).

The safety of everyone who uses Maryland's highway system is the highest priority for the SHA. Whether people are walking, biking, driving, or on the side of the road, the SHA is dedicated to saving lives and preventing injuries by reducing motor vehicle crashes. HB 1375 supports SHA's Vision Zero efforts and will play an important part in keeping Maryland's roadway responders and those they assist safe. All messaging displayed on Maryland State Highways must be in compliance with MUTCD standards.

The Maryland Department of Transportation respectfully requests that the Committee consider this information during its deliberation and issue House Bill 1375 a favorable report.

Respectfully submitted,

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AAA Mid-Atlantic's Testimony in SUPPORT of HB 1375

Uploaded by: Ragina Ali

Position: FAV



**AAA Mid-Atlantic's Testimony in SUPPORT of
HB 1375 - Vehicle Equipment - Portable Variable Messaging Signs
Sponsor: Delegate Stein**

- AAA Mid-Atlantic supports **HB 1375 - Vehicle Equipment - Portable Variable Messaging Signs**, authorizing a tow truck to display a portable variable messaging sign (VMS), mounted on the tow truck while at the scene of a crash or a disabled vehicle.
- These signs can display arrows or safety messages to warn drivers of dangerous situations along Maryland roadways, protecting drivers and those on the roadside.
- Data analyzed by the [AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety](#) found that nearly 2,000 people were killed outside of a vehicle in roadside crashes over the 5-year period from 2017 to 2021.
- Researchers also identified 123 roadside assistance providers who had been killed by passing vehicles between 2015 and 2021, with 63% occurring when it was dark.
- The AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety evaluated the effectiveness of vehicle-mounted variable message signs (VMS) in promoting safer behaviors in passing motorists and found that when variable message signs (VMS) were active:
 - Drivers were more likely to move over and slow down.
 - The odds of a vehicle moving over when VMS was active was 95%.
 - Active VMS had a greater impact on speed reductions in the lane nearest the vehicle.
 - Passenger vehicles were more responsive to VMS use than trucks or buses (although both vehicle types are more likely to move over when VMS is active compared to when not).
 - If a vehicle was making a lane change, its speed also tended to be lower than those who stayed in a lane (i.e., borrowing from the slogan, they would “slow down” and “move over”).
 - The results imply that using VMS can positively impact traffic, especially passenger vehicles.
- Variable Messaging Signs are already in use by state agencies, and will help save the lives of motorists and tow truck drivers at the side of the road, by alerting approaching drivers, well in advance of the presence of a tow truck, and often times another driver ahead.
- Virginia just passed similar legislation, which was unanimously supported in both the House and the Senate, and signed into law by Governor Youngkin this week.
- This life-saving signage will help drivers comply with Maryland's Move Over laws, as well.
- We respectfully urge the Committee to give **HB 1375** a favorable report.

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EXAMPLES OF VMS IN USE