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STATE'S ATTORNEY

Date: February 3, 2025

Bill: HB 361 – Sherry and Christian's Law

Position: Support

The Office of the State's Attorney for Wicomico County and Jamie L. Dykes, State's Attorney for Wicomico County, support House Bill 361 – Sherry and Christian's Law – and urge the Judiciary Committee to issue a favorable report on this important bill.

Sherry and Christian's Law was passed by the Senate unanimously last session, and with good reason – HB 361 requires individuals who have been charged with reckless or negligent driving to appear in court if their driving contributed to the death of another. As the law currently exists, individuals whose ordinary negligence has resulted in the loss of human life can prepay a fine and never witness the effect their conduct has had on others.

This bill corrects that by requiring their presence in court. Even though the maximum penalty for these violations is a fine of \$1,000, families of victims should have an opportunity to express to courts the magnitude of their loss, and defendants should be confronted with the grief their conduct has inflicted on others. HB 361 treats these types of cases – cases that have resulted in death – with the solemnity they deserve.

The Office of the State's Attorney for Wicomico County stands in support of legislation like HB 361 that improves the ability of our criminal justice system to facilitate the healing process both by giving victims an opportunity to be heard and by giving defendants a chance to recognize the harm they have caused and take accountability for their actions.