



SafeRoadsMD

PLEASE SUPPORT HB 777
“Hot Cars Act of 2026”

MARYLAND COALITION FOR ROADWAY SAFETY, INC.

URGES MD HOUSE ENT COMMITTEE SUPPORT FOR HB 777

February 17, 2026

TO:

Honorable Delegate Marc Korman, Chair
Honorable Delegate Michele Guyton, Vice Chair
House Environment and Transportation Committee
Maryland General Assembly
250 & 251 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

FROM:

John Seng, Chair
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SafeRoadsMD.org



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Subj: Support of HB 777 — Motor Vehicles – Rear Occupant Alert Systems (Hot Cars Act of 2026)
Environment & Transportation Committee

Dear Chair Korman, Vice Chair Guyton and Members of the Maryland House Environment and Transportation Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in strong support of House Bill 777 — the Hot Cars Act of 2026.

SafeRoadsMD is a Maryland-wide nonprofit dedicated to advancing traffic safety and preventing needless tragedies on our roads. I write today because HB 777 represents a commonsense, lifesaving policy that will protect Maryland families — especially our most vulnerable: children, pets, and other rear-seat occupants.

Each year in the United States, dozens of children suffer and die due to pediatric vehicular heatstroke when left unattended in parked cars. In Maryland alone last year, we suffered multiple heartbreaking deaths in 2025 from hot car incidents. For example, a 2-year-old girl in Montgomery County tragically died after being left in a vehicle for several hours earlier this spring, before the summer heat arrived, underscoring how quickly and unexpectedly these events can unfold. ([WJLA](#))

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This was followed by the death of a 6-month-old baby girl in Harford County this past summer — the second such hot car death in Maryland — when interior temperatures soared and life-threatening heat built up inside a closed vehicle. ([CBS News](#))

These tragedies are not rare and they are not simply “unfortunate accidents.” Disaster results from human fallibility — an all-too-common lapse in routine, distraction, or stress that causes a caregiver to forget a child in the back seat. Research shows that memory systems can override our awareness during routine tasks, especially when a normal pattern changes even slightly, and this can lead to catastrophic outcomes. ([WMAR 2 News Baltimore](#))

HB 777 helps address that vulnerability by requiring new passenger vehicles sold in Maryland to include federally-standardized Rear Occupant Alert Systems (ROAS). These systems remind drivers to check the rear seats after turning off the vehicle — a simple prompt that can interrupt a memory lapse at a critical moment and prevent an otherwise preventable tragedy.

This technology is already being adopted by many automakers voluntarily. But mandating this technology for vehicles sold in Maryland ensures that all Maryland families benefit from this lifesaving innovation.

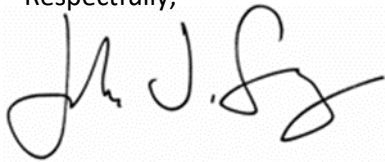
Importantly, the bill appropriately aligns with federal standards and allows time for manufacturers to comply following final NHTSA regulations. It balances safety with practical implementation for the auto industry while empowering the Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA) to verify compliance at the time of sale or registration.

Some have noted concerns about costs associated with vehicle equipment mandates. Rear occupant alert systems, however, are already being deployed in many vehicles today, and the technology’s benefits far outweigh any incremental cost — especially considering the *precious human lives* at stake.

The bottom line: HB 777 is a proactive, preventative, and humane measure. It does not wait until another Maryland family suffers the unimaginable loss of a child due to heatstroke in a parked vehicle. Instead, it leverages a proven tool to reduce the likelihood of that loss. For these reasons, SafeRoadsMD urges your favorable report on HB 777.

Thank you for your service and consideration.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John J. Seng". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "John" being the most prominent.

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

cc: SafeRoadsMD Board