



SafeRoadsMD

PLEASE SUPPORT HB 1295
“Vehicle Laws – Fully Autonomous Vehicles”

MARYLAND COALITION FOR ROADWAY SAFETY, INC.
URGES MD HOUSE ENT COMMITTEE SUPPORT FOR HB 1295

March 3, 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
SafeRoadsMD - Maryland Coalition for Roadway Safety, Inc.
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SafeRoadsMD.org

Subj: Support of HB 1295 - “Vehicle Laws – Fully Autonomous Vehicles”

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

My name is John Seng, founder and chair of SafeRoadsMD. We request your favorable report for HB 1295 “Vehicle Laws – Fully Autonomous Vehicles.”

SafeRoadsMD is 100 percent committed to one goal: reducing roadway deaths in Maryland to zero. And zero is a very low number.

Maryland continues to lose between 400 and 500 people every year on our roads. That number is not drifting toward zero. It is stubbornly, tragically persistent. At that pace, we will lose another 4,000 to 5,000 Marylanders in the next decade if nothing meaningfully changes. No doubt human drivers will deserve most of the blame, by far.

So the question before us is not whether autonomous vehicles are perfect.

The question is whether they are safer than what we currently tolerate.

Maryland Coalition for Roadway Safety, Inc.
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Because what we currently tolerate are the persistent “add-ons” to human driving behavior.

Speeding.	Impairment.	Distraction.
Aggression.	Fatigue.	Overconfidence.

Errant, if not criminal, human behavior remains the dominant factor in serious crashes. We have redesigned roads, added signals, deployed cameras, and invested millions in infrastructure. These efforts matter. But they are expensive, slow to implement and constrained by limited state and municipal budgets.

We cannot reconstruct every dangerous roadway in Maryland fast enough to reach zero.

Now, skepticism about autonomous vehicles is understandable. Not all AV systems are the same. Some companies are still refining technology. But we must be honest about the data emerging from real-world deployment.

Waymo vehicles, operating at scale in multiple U.S. cities, have demonstrated crash rates significantly lower than human-driven vehicles in comparable environments. Their systems do not drive impaired. They do not text. They do not road rage. They do not exceed the speed limit because they are late.

[A recent New York Times opinion piece](#) substantiated a critical point: we are holding autonomous vehicles to a near-perfection standard while accepting thousands of preventable deaths from human drivers every year. The relevant comparison is not whether AVs are flawless. It is whether they outperform the average human driver in reducing preventable harm.

That is the standard we should apply.

HB 1295 does not open the floodgates recklessly. It establishes guardrails:

- Minimal-risk fallback requirements
- First responder coordination plans
- Crash reporting
- Insurance and financial responsibility standards
- Clear oversight authority

This is structured deployment, not blind enthusiasm.

But we must also confront urgency. If a technology accessible today can measurably reduce speeding, eliminate impairment, and dramatically limit distraction, then failing to deploy it responsibly is not caution. It is delay.

Autonomous vehicles also introduce something we have never had before: **a visible model of compliant driving.**

**An AV does not “push” the speed limit.
It does not creep into crosswalks.
It does not weave aggressively through traffic.
It signals. It yields. It maintains safe following distance.**

That behavior is observable.

With enough adoption, that behavior becomes normative.

Imagine Maryland roadways where a growing share of vehicles travel at lawful speeds, brake predictably and refuse to engage in aggressive maneuvers. The overall climate of driving changes. The pace calms. The mayhem dampens. The chill, disciplined standard overtakes chaos.

That is not fantasy. It is behavioral modeling at scale.

Maryland roads are not racetracks. They are shared public corridors. And right now, the most unpredictable and risky component in most vehicles is the human driver.

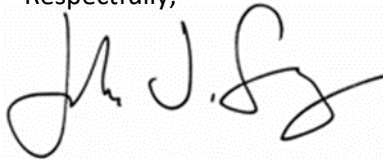
If autonomous systems — particularly those already demonstrating superior safety performance — can reduce that risk, then we have a responsibility to move forward thoughtfully but decisively.

Zero is not negotiable. And it’s possible.

HB 1295 represents an opportunity to begin replacing the most dangerous variable in our transportation system with something demonstrably more disciplined.

SafeRoadsMD urges your favorable report.

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

Attachment: (See: https://www.nytimes.com/2025/12/02/opinion/self-driving-cars.html?unlocked_article_code=1.QVA.t0Y1.E4_8V0PRNjQ4&smid=url-share)