



Live the life you want.

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To: House Environment and Transportation Committee

The members of the National Federation of the Blind of Maryland urge the House Environment and Transportation Committee to give a favorable report to HB0381 - State Highway Administration - Urban Core and Urban Center Traffic Control Devices - No Turn on Red.

Our organization's membership consists of blind Marylanders, many of whom are intrepid travelers, and many of whom wish to learn to travel. Unlike sighted pedestrians, blind pedestrians are unable to use vision, and thus often travel with long white canes, guide dogs, or other alternative techniques. Sighted pedestrians can learn pedestrian safety by observing, but blind travelers must receive specialized instruction called Orientation and Mobility (O&M). Because this type of instruction is highly specialized, blind travelers must start learning cane skills when we are young if possible, or as early as possible into our blindness journeys, and the instruction continues until we feel confident in our abilities. However, due to the specialized nature of O&M instruction, we may only receive as little as an hour of instruction per week, sometimes less.

One alternative technique blind pedestrians learn is to listen to the flow of traffic, and to cross with parallel traffic. We learn that generally speaking, if traffic is parallel, it should not cause physical harm. The notable exception is when drivers turn right such as at intersections allowing right turns on red. The blind pedestrian reasonably assumes, due to the stoppage in perpendicular traffic and the flow of parallel traffic, that it is safe to cross the street. If a car turns right, this poses a potentially life-threatening safety hazard. The easiest solution is to install "no right on red" traffic controls and monitoring.

For this reason, we ask for a favorable report on HB0381. For questions, please contact me at President@nfbmd.org or at 443-426-4110.