

# **SB179\_SafeRoadsMD\_FAV**

Uploaded by: John Seng

Position: FAV



**SafeRoadsMD**

**PLEASE SUPPORT SB 179**  
“Transportation - Study on Speed Limits -  
Interstate 495 and Connected Highways”

**MARYLAND COALITION FOR ROADWAY SAFETY, INC.**  
**URGES MD SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE SUPPORT FOR SB 179**

February 25, 2026

TO:

Honorable Senator Pamela Beidle, Chair  
Honorable Senator Antonio Hayes, Vice Chair  
Maryland General Assembly  
Senate Finance Committee  
3 East Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

FROM:

John Seng, Chair  
SafeRoadsMD - Maryland Coalition for Roadway Safety, Inc.  
(202) 468-7682, [JSeng@SafeRoadsMD.org](mailto:JSeng@SafeRoadsMD.org)  
[SafeRoadsMD.org](http://SafeRoadsMD.org)

**Re: Request for a Favorable Report on SB 179, “Transportation - Study on Speed Limits - Interstate 495 and Connected Highways”**

Dear Chair Beidle and Vice Chair Hayes,

On behalf of SafeRoadsMD – Maryland Coalition for Roadway Safety, Inc., I respectfully write to express our support for Senate Bill 179, introduced by Senator Joanne Benson, which directs the Maryland Department of Transportation to study speed limits on highways that connect to Interstate 495.

We believe this study is both prudent and necessary, given the complexity of traffic operations on and around the Capital Beltway. The study’s requirement to identify relevant corridors, document speed limits, evaluate congestion patterns, and analyze crashes and enforcement data over the past five years will create an evidence base that should inform future policy decisions in nuanced but important ways.

At the same time, we emphasize that safety must remain paramount in the Committee’s consideration of this measure. Maryland’s speed management policies should be grounded in crash reduction and injury prevention — not simply driver convenience or perceived comfort.

Recent crash data remind us why careful analysis is warranted:

- **Speed-related crashes continue to be a significant safety challenge in Maryland.** On average over the past five years, there have been approximately 7,700 speed-involved crashes annually, including nearly 100 fatal speed-related crashes per year.<sup>1</sup>
- **Certain segments of the Capital Beltway and its interchange corridors** — for example, between Georgia Avenue and Colesville Road and between I-270 and Connecticut Avenue — **have historically experienced hundreds of reported crashes annually**, reflecting the interaction of high traffic volumes and complex merging movements.<sup>2</sup>
- **News coverage report of incidents** along or near I-495, including a fairly recent rollover crash on I-495 in Oxon Hill, Prince George’s County in which **one person was killed and three others seriously injured in a single-vehicle rollover crash just before St. Barnabas Road on the Outer Loop of I-495.** This crash forced extended closures and investigation.<sup>3</sup>

These patterns illustrate that driver behavior — particularly excessive speed — is a persistent factor in the severity of crashes on and around the Beltway. This evidence also demonstrates that abrupt transitions in posted speeds, if not appropriately calibrated to roadway design and risk conditions, can create environments where drivers are uncertain about the appropriate operating speed, contributing to inconsistent speeds and unpredictable vehicle movements.

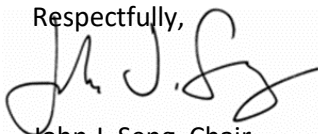
We appreciate that SB 179 directs MDOT to analyze not just crash statistics but also congestion, enforcement prevalence, and roadway conditions — and crucially, to assess the feasibility of limiting speed limit changes to a 5-miles-per-hour transition at Beltway connection points. This thoughtful approach recognizes that speed management is both an engineering and a behavioral challenge.

However, any recommendations that might arise from the study should prioritize reducing harm over reducing citation frequency. Where lower posted speeds are justified by design, conflict points, or crash history, those safety thresholds should guide decisions. Where speed transitions may contribute to driver confusion that elevates risk, appropriate countermeasures such as early warning signage, improved geometric design, and context-sensitive enforcement should be considered.

**SafeRoadsMD supports SB 179** as a means to generate meaningful data that can inform balanced, safety-focused policy. We encourage the Committee to ensure that the study’s conclusions emphasize crash and injury prevention as the foremost criteria for any future policy or signage changes.

Thank you for your leadership and for your careful consideration of this important measure.

Respectfully,



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

cc: SafeRoadsMD board

1. <https://zerodeathsmd.gov/resources/crashdata/>

2. <https://wtop.com/local/2021/12/the-most-crash-prone-dc-region-roads-as-reported-by-wtop/>

3. <https://wtop.com/maryland/2025/10/one-person-dead-three-others-seriously-injured-after-car-rolls-over-on-i-495-outer-loop/>

# **SB 179 Support Letter Testimony FAV.pdf**

Uploaded by: Omar Masood

Position: FAV



**Statement of Omar Masood, Director of State Government Relations, Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety**

**FAVORABLE: In Support of Senate Bill 179  
Senate Finance Committee  
Maryland General Assembly  
February 25, 2026**

Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety (Advocates), an alliance of consumer, safety, medical, public health and law enforcement groups and insurance companies working together to pass highway and auto safety laws that prevent crashes, save lives, reduce injuries, and contain costs, supports enactment of Senate Bill (SB) 179. This legislation will require the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) to study the implications of speed limit changes on highways that connect to Interstate 495 (I-495).

In 2024, there were an overall estimated 579<sup>1</sup> traffic fatalities in Maryland, which is an 11 percent increase from 2015 to 2024.<sup>2</sup> Speeding is a major contributor to traffic fatalities as 30 percent of the fatalities in 2023 involved speeding. Additionally, speeding related fatalities increased 40 percent from 2014 to 2023.<sup>3</sup> Maryland incurs approximately \$5.9 billion in economic harm annually due to motor vehicle crashes according to a 2019 analysis.<sup>4</sup> This is equivalent to a “crash tax” of \$977 per resident each year.<sup>5</sup> When updated for inflation alone, in 2026, costs would equate to approximately \$7.6 billion.<sup>6</sup> Traffic safety is a serious and costly issue in urgent need of solutions.

SB 179 would require MDOT to conduct a study which includes identifying speed limits on highways connecting to I-495 and reviewing other traffic safety metrics, including the prevalence of crashes, hazards, incidents and speeding tickets over the past five years at locations where highways connect to I-495. In addition, the study would explore the feasibility of requiring the speed limit to deviate by only five miles per hour at such locations.

The data and analysis generated by the study would enable MDOT to make data-driven recommendations for safety improvements based on data that is current and specific to these roads, not assumptions. We urge you to advance SB 179.

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<sup>1</sup> Traffic Safety Facts: Crash Stats, Early Estimate of Motor Vehicle Traffic Fatalities in 2024, NHTSA, April 2025, DOT HS 813 710, available at <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813710>.

<sup>2</sup> State Traffic Safety Information for Maryland, NHTSA, available at <https://cdan.dot.gov/stsi.htm>.

<sup>3</sup> State Traffic Safety Information for Maryland, NHTSA, available at <https://cdan.dot.gov/STSI/stsi.htm>.

<sup>4</sup> The Economic and Societal Impact of Motor Vehicle Crashes, 2019, NHTSA, Feb. 2023, DOT HS 813 403, available at <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813403>.

<sup>5</sup> The Economic and Societal Impact of Motor Vehicle Crashes, 2019, NHTSA, Feb. 2023, DOT HS 813 403, available at <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813403>.

<sup>6</sup> CPI Inflation Calculator, BLS, Jan. 2019 to Jan. 2026, available at <https://data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/cpicalc.pl>.

# **SB0179 - LOI - SHA - Transportation - Study on Spe**

Uploaded by: Patricia Westervelt

Position: INFO



Wes Moore  
Governor  
Aruna Miller  
Lieutenant Governor  
Kathryn Thomson  
Acting Secretary

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February 25, 2026

The Honorable Pamela Beidle  
Chair, Senate Finance Committee  
3 East Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

***RE: Letter of Information – Senate Bill 179 – Transportation – Study on Speed Limits – Interstate 495 and Connected Highways***

Dear Chair Beidle and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) takes no position on Senate Bill 179 and offers the following information for the Committee’s consideration.

SB 179 directs MDOT to conduct a study of highways that connect to I-495, evaluating speed limits, congestion, and the prevalence of speeding tickets and crashes at the point where those highways connect to I-495. From that study, MDOT is to analyze the feasibility of requiring the speed limit to deviate by only 5 miles per hour where a highway in the State connects to I-495 and recommend measures for such a requirement. In execution of the study, MDOT must consult with local officials and stakeholders with expertise and familiarity with traffic safety issues on these corridors. MDOT must report its findings to the Governor and the General Assembly by December 31, 2026.

MDOT is strongly committed to the Vision Zero goals endorsed by the General Assembly and seeks to use appropriate speed management techniques, including reductions to speed limits, to address identified safety issues. The State Highway Administration (SHA) regularly evaluates safety issues on State roadways, particularly those identified by State and local elected officials and community stakeholders.

Through a variety of initiatives, SHA evaluates road user safety in corridors throughout the State. This work includes routes connecting to I-495. MDOT anticipates this legislation would largely replicate those efforts. SHA recently reduced speed limits on the following corridors in the Capital region: MD 97 (Georgia Avenue) from Silver Spring through Aspen Hill; MD 187 (Old Georgetown Boulevard) and MD 190 (River Road) in Bethesda; and MD 650 (New Hampshire Avenue) in Silver Spring.

SHA also has the following corridors under study for speed reductions in Montgomery and Prince George’s counties: US 29 (Colesville Road) from Four Corners through Burnt Mills; MD 355 (Rockville Pike) from Bethesda through Rockville; MD 650 (New Hampshire Avenue) from Hillandale through White Oak; MD 201 (Kenilworth Avenue) from Berwyn Heights through Greenbelt; MD 202 (Landover Road and Largo Road) from Largo through Lake Arbor; MD 212 (Powder Mill Road) in Beltsville; MD 214 (Central Avenue) from Seat Pleasant through Largo;

The Honorable Pamela Beidle  
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MD 4 (Pennsylvania Avenue) in Forestville; MD 414 (St. Barnabas Road) in Marlow Heights; MD 450 (Annapolis Road) from New Carrollton through Lanham; and US 1 (Baltimore Avenue) from College Park through Beltsville.

The proposed scope and deadline for the study warrants refinement, as the location focus of where roadways meet I-495 may not capture other areas along the corridors where greater attention to safety hazards is warranted. SHA follows a Context Driven approach that considers the land use, density, and other roadway features to ensure the design fits the character of the highway – for example, rural roads would be treated differently than urban core. The bill mandates speed studies over a large regional area without consideration for unique roadway contexts. There are 29 exits on I-495 in Maryland, and each would be studied under this bill if passed as introduced. In addition to reviewing connected highways and exits, the entirety of the I-495 corridor would need to be reviewed to adequately assess the issues captured in this study.

SHA does not have funding identified or the necessary resources for the comprehensive study. In order to complete the study within the mandated timeframe, SHA would have to divert engineering resources from other critical statewide traffic safety initiatives, like the Pedestrian Safety Action Plan, crosswalk and signal upgrades, and local speed camera requests, to complete these studies.

MDOT would be happy to work with the sponsor to discuss the particular areas of concern and discuss the steps SHA has taken to evaluate those locations and opportunities where further evaluation may be warranted.

The Maryland Department of Transportation respectfully requests that the Committee consider this information while reviewing Senate Bill 179.

Respectfully submitted,

April Moeller  
Director of Government Affairs  
Maryland State Highway Administration  
410-210-5780

Matthew Mickler  
Director of Government Affairs  
Maryland Department of Transportation  
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