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**THE SENATE OF MARYLAND**  
**ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401**

**February 4, 2025**

**The Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee**

**SB 367 – Wicomico County – Highway Pedestrian Safety Act**

**Statement of Support by Bill Sponsor Senator Mary Beth Carozza**

Thank you Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the distinguished Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee for this opportunity to present Senate Bill 367, the Wicomico County Highway Pedestrian Safety Act. I want to thank the Committee members for their support of a previous version of this legislation, Senate Bill 101 of 2025, which unanimously passed the Senate and was being considered on the House floor, but ultimately did not receive final passage before the end of the legislative session.

This local, enabling legislation would prohibit a person from standing in a roadway, shoulder, median divide, or intersection determined by Wicomico County or a municipality in Wicomico County to be inherently dangerous. An individual who stands in a roadway poses various challenges and risks to themselves, the drivers on the road, the responding officers, and the surrounding community.

Since 2022, the Salisbury Police Department has responded to 457 calls for service related to highway and pedestrian safety issues. From January 1 to December 31, 2025, there were 120 calls alone, and 45 of those calls were reported as aggressive behavior or impeding traffic. There have been instances where the individual places him or herself directly in front of an oncoming vehicle, and situations where students are placing themselves in danger by fundraising from the median strip.

This has been a recurring public safety issue in our community with officers encountering situations in which pedestrians are acting unstable and, in many cases, aggressive toward motorists, and where individuals appear to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol, further compounding the danger.

As this Committee knows, while Maryland law contains general pedestrian and traffic safety provisions, existing statutes do not adequately address this specific and escalating conduct. Passage of this legislation would enable officers in Wicomico County to deter hazardous roadway behavior, make appropriate contact with individuals who may be in crisis, connect them with available services and engage mental health co-responder teams when appropriate. Most important, it will enhance roadway safety for everyone who travels throughout our community.

It is important to note that SB 367 does not criminalize individuals who are soliciting donations,

as a police officer may not issue a citation unless the appropriate signage notifying the public that they cannot stand in the inherently dangerous roadway, shoulder, median divider, or intersection has been installed. This legislation is fully intended to increase public safety by ensuring that individuals are not standing in roadways, regardless of their intentions, where it could be dangerous. Individuals in roadways have become an increasing public safety concern in Wicomico County, and prohibiting this action would allow our public safety officers to protect the public and assist those individuals who may need assistance due to poverty and homelessness.

As stated previously, this legislation was previously introduced in a different form as SB 101 of 2025, which was modeled after other local enabling bills that already passed and are in effect in Carroll, Charles, Harford, and Washington counties (Transportation Article 21-507(c)). SB 101 unanimously passed the Senate, unanimously passed the House Environment and Transportation Committee as amended, but ultimately did not make final passage before Sine Die.

During the Interim, I worked with Delegate Vaughn Stewart, former Chair of the Motor Vehicle and Transportation Subcommittee of the House Environment and Transportation Committee, to discuss the best path forward on this important local public safety legislation. The topic of solicitations in roadways has received conflicting opinions from the Office of the Attorney General over the years. We believe SB 367 as a content-neutral bill addresses the questions raised by the Office of the Attorney General.

Senate Bill 367 would simply prohibit a person from standing in a roadway determined by Wicomico County to be inherently dangerous (which means posing a serious risk of injury to a pedestrian, a driver or passenger in a vehicle, or other persons that cannot be mitigated with the exercise of ordinary care).

This local bill is supported by the Salisbury Police Department, the Wicomico Sheriff's Office, Wicomico Public Schools, the City of Salisbury, Salisbury University, the Wicomico County Council, the Wicomico County Executive, and the Wicomico County State's Attorney.

I thank you for your kind attention and consideration, and I respectfully request a favorable and very swift report on SB 367, the Wicomico County Highway Pedestrian Safety Act, a priority local public safety bill.