



State of Maryland
Maryland Institute for Emergency Medical Services Systems

Wes W. Moore
Governor

Clay B. Stamp
Chairman EMS Board

Theodore R. Delbridge, MD, MPH
Executive Director

January 23, 2026

The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr.
Chair, Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Senate Bill 195 – Motorcycles – Protective Headgear Requirement – Exception (In Remembrance of Gary “Pappy Boward”)

—LETTER OF OPPOSITION—

Dear Senator Smith:

The Maryland Institute for Emergency Medical Services Systems respectfully submits this letter in opposition to SB 195, which would exempt a driver of a motorcycle and the driver’s passenger from wearing protective headgear if the driver is at least age 21, has been licensed to operate a motorcycle for at least two years, and has completed a specified motorcycle safety course.

Maryland’s current helmet law, which requires all motorcycle riders to wear eye-protective devices and headgear that meets certain standards, was created in response to widespread concerns regarding the incidence and severity of head injuries resulting from motorcycle crashes in Maryland and throughout the country. This law represents an effective public health strategy for the following reasons:

- Motorcycle head injuries often result in fatalities or life-long disabilities and require intensive and more costly inpatient and outpatient treatment and resources.
- The Maryland Institute for Emergency Medical Services Systems reports that Maryland’s trauma centers treated 1,019 patients involved in motorcycle crashes during Fiscal Year 2025, of which 860 were 21 years of age or older. Of these patients, 243 sustained a head injury and 17 died from their injuries. Of the 243 riders who sustained head injuries, 147 (60.5%) were wearing a helmet and 96 (39.5%) were not. All 243 required treatment and 84 were admitted. Nine (10.7%) of the admitted patients stayed in the hospital for one day. Twelve (14.3%) of the admitted patients required hospitalization for more than 28 days.
- According to 2022 data compiled by the U.S. Department of Transportation, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), per vehicle miles traveled in 2022, the fatality rate for motorcyclists (26.16) was almost 22 times the passenger car occupant fatality rate (1.20). See <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813589>
- A meta-analysis of studies regarding the economic impact of helmet use on motorcycle accidents demonstrated that unhelmeted patients required \$12,239 more in hospital costs per patient. See <https://www.sciencedirect.com/org/science/article/abs/pii/S1538958821001107>
- According to a report published by NHTSA, helmets have been shown to provide significant protection from head injury for motorcyclists since serious head injury is common among fatally injured motorcyclists. Helmets are approximately 37 percent effective in preventing motorcycle deaths and about 67 percent effective in preventing brain injuries. See: <http://www.iihs.org/iihs/topics/t/motorcycles/fatalityfacts/motorcycles>

- NHTSA reports in its *Five-Year Motorcycle Safety Plan* that 60% of motorcyclist fatalities are caused by head injury, and the use of a helmet offers a motorcyclist the best protection from fatal and non-fatal injuries. See https://www.nhtsa.gov/sites/nhtsa.dot.gov/files/documents/13507-motorcycle_safety_plan_050919_v8-tag.pdf and [Motorcycle Safety: Helmets, Motorists, Road Awareness | NHTSA](#)

For the foregoing reasons, MIEMSS urges an unfavorable report on SB 195. Please let me know if you have any questions or would like any additional information.

Sincerely,



Theodore R. Delbridge, MD, MPH
Executive Director