

SB66(Jamari's Law) Favorable Testimony - A. Mathis

Uploaded by: Adrienne Dillahunt

Position: FAV

Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 66
Manslaughter by Vehicle or Vessel - Increased Penalties (Jamari's Law)
Judicial Proceedings Committee
January 21, 2026

To the Honorable Chair and Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee:

I am Adrienne M. Mathis, a lifelong resident of St. Mary's County, a retired educator, a mother, and a concerned citizen. I am submitting this written testimony in the interest of justice and public safety. I strongly support Senate Bill 66, also known as Jamari's Law, which proposes a significant increase in penalties for manslaughter by vehicle or vessel. This bill would raise the maximum sentence for a first offense from 10 to 20 years and for subsequent convictions from 15 to 30 years. This measure is vital because it creates a much-needed stronger deterrent against drunk driving and more appropriately addresses repeat offenders.

SB66 is named in honor of Jamari Tyrese Duckett. Born on December 30, 2003, to Shownda Greenwell and John Duckett, Jamari was a kind-hearted, bright, and ambitious young man with a promising future. He planned to attend college and was excited about the next chapter after graduating from high school. Jamari deeply valued his time with his parents, siblings, family, and friends. Tragically, Jamari's life was cut short at age 18 on July 10, 2022, just weeks after his graduation, due to a devastating DUI crash that happened the night before. His death is a profound loss for his family, marking the fourth heartbreaking family loss attributed to a DUI since 1968.

This bill is necessary because current, shockingly lenient penalties equate vehicular homicide with simple misdemeanor assault. This gross injustice causes widespread outrage, as evidenced by a similar Maryland case where the driver who killed the beloved North Potomac couple, Ana and Miguel Ortiz, received only a few years in prison.

Drunk driving is a preventable tragedy that claims thousands of lives each year in the U.S. and puts an enormous strain on families. The impacts are broad, disproportionately affecting young people and communities of color through devastating loss, financial hardship, and intergenerational trauma, worsening existing inequalities.

This legislation isn't just a bill; it's a beacon of hope for families devastated by drunk and reckless driving. We must hold accountable those who put innocent lives at risk. While nothing can fully heal the pain of losing a loved one, Jamari's Law sends a clear message to potential offenders. Jamari had endless potential and was passionately dedicated to making the world a better place. His dreams were filled with hope and promise. It's our duty to carry forward his legacy. By passing Jamari's Law, we not only honor his memory but also motivate future generations to prioritize safe and responsible driving. Together, we can transform our grief into action and inspire change that reflects Jamari's spirit and vision for a brighter future.

To promote fairness and safety, we must:

- Raise penalties to match the value of human life and discourage reckless behavior;
- Bring justice to victims' families like the Duckett's;
- Align Maryland's laws with the seriousness of these crimes.

Support for Jamari's Law will:

- Discourage repeat drunk drivers;
- Save lives by ensuring accountability;
- Provide closure for affected families;
- Strengthen community trust in our justice system.

For all these reasons—the need to increase penalties to honor the sanctity of life, to serve justice for victims, and to enhance public safety—I respectfully ask the Judicial Proceedings Committee to give a favorable report on Senate Bill 66.

Adrienne M. Mathis
Concerned Citizen
St. Mary's County, Maryland
District - 29B

Jamari's Law SB0066.pdf

Uploaded by: Arlene Rosenbusch

Position: FAV

Dear Senator Kramer,

My name is Arlene Rosenbusch, a constituent in your district. I am writing to you to urge you to help pass SB0066, Jamari's Law, which strengthens penalties for manslaughter while driving under the influence by raising **maximum** penalties from 10 years to 20 years and subsequent offenses from 15 years to 30 years.

I am writing from personal experience. My sister, Lynne Rosenbusch and her husband, John Fauerby (both Maryland residents), were killed by a drunk driver in Maryland in 2015. The offender was sentenced to maximum of 10 years, but because drunk driving is not considered a violent crime, she only served 1/4 of the time (around 2 years). The rest is probation.

When someone chooses to drive impaired, recklessly, or with gross negligence and takes a life, the harm is no accident to the families left behind. Yet under current law, the consequences often do not reflect the severity of the crime or the devastation it causes. For families like mine, it feels as though our loved ones' lives are treated as less valuable simply because the weapon was a vehicle.

Jamari's Law matters because it:

- Recognizes the seriousness of killing someone through dangerous driving.
- Provides judges with stronger sentencing options that reflect the true impact of these crimes.
- DUI manslaughter is not considered a "violent crime," and offenders serve less than a quarter of their sentence.
- Sends a clear message that Maryland will not tolerate reckless behavior that puts innocent lives at risk.

This bill does not impose mandatory minimums. It simply allows the justice system to hold offenders appropriately accountable when a life is lost. Accountability is not about revenge, it is about protecting others, honoring victims, and ensuring families like mine do not have to endure this same heartbreak.

Please stand with victim families across Maryland and vote **YES on SB0066 also known as Jamari's Law**.

Thank you for taking the time to listen to my story and for your service to Maryland.

Sincerely,

Ms. Arlene Rosenbusch
14400 Gaines Ave.
Rockville, MD 20853
240-888-0645

SB0066 2026 Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Brandon Russell

Position: FAV

January 20, 2026

Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Distinguished Committee Members,

My name is Brandon Russell and I am a resident of St. Mary's County. I'm writing in support of Senate Bill 0066 - Jamari's Law, urging your committee to issue a **favorable report** on this legislation.

Jamari Duckett's young life ended too soon because of the negligence of a drunk driver in 2022. The driver was traveling at speeds of up to 91 miles per hour in a 40-mile-per-hour speed limit zone when he struck Jamari's vehicle.

Under current law, a first offense for manslaughter by vehicle carries a maximum of 10 years in prison, with subsequent offenses carrying a maximum of 15 years. This crime is considered a "non-violent" offense despite the violent effects on the lives of the Duckett family. Those convicted can be eligible for parole after serving just one-quarter of their sentence, meaning those sentenced to 10 years for a first offense could be released in as little as 2.5 years.

This bill would increase the maximum penalties to 20 years for a first offense, and 30 years for a second offense. Importantly, the bill will not create a mandatory minimum sentence. Rather, it provides judges flexibility when sentencing those found guilty of this crime.

Again, I urge a **favorable report** from your committee.

Thank you.

Brandon Russell
Leonardtown, MD

Testimony SB66.pdf

Uploaded by: Christopher West

Position: FAV

CHRIS WEST
Legislative District 42
Baltimore and Carroll Counties

Judicial Proceedings Committee



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800-492-7122 Ext. 3648
Chris.West@senate.maryland.gov

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

January 22, 2026

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

RE: Senate Bill 66 – Manslaughter by Vehicle or Vessel – Increased Penalties (Jamari’s Law)

Chair Smith, Vice-Chair Waldstreicher, and Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee,

I am here to introduce Senate Bill 66. This legislation would raise the maximum penalties for causing the death of another as a result of the person’s driving, operating, or controlling a vehicle or vessel in a grossly negligent manner under Section 2-209 of the Criminal Law Article.

Under current law, a first offense under Section 2-209 is a felony and carries a maximum penalty of 10 years, while a subsequent offense carries a maximum penalty of 15 years. Senate Bill 66 increases these penalties to 20 years for a first offense and 30 years for a subsequent offense.

This legislation is named Jamari’s Law for Jamari Duckett, who was a resident of St. Mary’s County. In 2022, Jamari was the victim of a car accident caused by a driver who was drunk and traveling at a high rate of speed. According to the investigation, immediately prior to the accident, the drunk driver was driving at speeds between 76 and 91 miles per hour on a road where the speed limit is 40 miles per hour. Jamari tragically died as a result of the injuries he sustained in this accident. He was 18 years old.

The St. Mary’s County State’s Attorney’s Office successfully prosecuted the drunk driver in this case, who was sentenced to the maximum penalty of 10 years. As this is considered a non-violent offense, it is possible for this individual to serve about a quarter of their sentence in prison. This means that, when considering diminution credits and the possibility of parole, the offender could be released in as little as 2½ years. I believe that this is far too short a time for the crime of manslaughter by vehicle or vessel.

It is important to note that this bill does not impose any minimum sentences, it only gives our judges further discretion in their sentencing of those who are found guilty of violating this law. This Committee is aware of the threat that drunk and negligent driving poses to our State’s

CHRIS WEST
Legislative District 42
Baltimore and Carroll Counties

Judicial Proceedings Committee



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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

citizens. I believe this legislation will continue the work that we have done to combat drunk driving in Maryland.

I appreciate the Committee's consideration of Senate Bill 66 and will be happy to answer any questions. The prosecutors on this case would be happy to explain in further detail more about this.

Jamari law.pdf

Uploaded by: Cody Flerlage

Position: FAV

Grace Bonds
21339 Village Ct.
Great Mills MD 20634

I am writing in support of Jamari Law SB 66. The law is to fight for those against drunk drivers , some people say sorry but the same things happens each year. ALL people are important not just those with influence to write the laws.

Grace Bonds

Carla Snell
47141 Schwartzkopf Dr.
Lexington Park, MD 20653

I support SB 66 !!

Im the mother of someone who has driven drunk, and i support Jamari law 100%. I pray my son never drives drunk again. I feel a person that drinks and drives should be made to see the consequences especially when the life of someone is taken away!

Carla Snell

Monica Biscoe
240-925-0411
Lexington Park, MD 20653

I just want to say that too many young lives are cut short from this and I fully support Jamari law.

Monica Biscoe

Damont Barnes is in Favor of Jamaris Law.pdf

Uploaded by: damont barnes

Position: FAV

I, Damont Barnes, am in favor of Senate Bill 66/Jamari's Law

This Law would hold the driver to greater accountability.

This Law would give families justice (proper justice).

This Law would send a message across the state that there is zero tolerance for Drunk Driving and this new law would make anyone think twice.

This Law would set the stage for accountability to anyone who is convicted for drunk driving.

Respectfully,

Damont Barnes

Jamaris_Law_Personal_Testimony_Editable.pdf

Uploaded by: Dana Goldsby

Position: FAV

**Personal Testimony in Support of Jamari's Law
Maryland General Assembly**

My name is Dana Goldsby, and I am a resident of Maryland. I am here today as Jamari's aunt — speaking from a place of love, loss, and an urgent need for change.

Jamari was my nephew. He was 18 years old — just beginning adulthood, just beginning to live. He had plans, dreams, and a future that should have stretched decades ahead of him. Instead, Jamari's life was taken by a drunk driver — a choice that was reckless, preventable, and irreversible.

Our family will carry this pain for the rest of our lives. There is no way to fully describe what it feels like to lose someone so young, so full of promise, to something that never should have happened. Jamari did everything right. He was simply in the wrong place at the wrong time — and the system failed to protect him.

Jamari's death was not just a tragedy. It was a policy failure.

Drunk driving is not an accident. It is a decision. And when laws are not strong enough, enforcement is inconsistent, or consequences are not sufficient to deter behavior, innocent people like Jamari pay the price.

Jamari's Law exists because preventable loss continues to happen. It exists because current measures have not gone far enough to protect the public, to hold offenders accountable, or to stop repeat behavior before lives are lost. It exists because families like mine should not have to bury loved ones due to choices that could have been stopped.

This law is about stronger accountability for impaired driving, meaningful consequences that deter reckless behavior, prevention instead of reaction, and honoring victims by closing gaps that allow this to keep happening.

Jamari did not get a second chance. Our family does not get a second chance. No apology, sentence, or statement can give us back the life that was taken. What we can do — what you can do — is ensure that Jamari's death leads to real change.

Passing Jamari's Law means acknowledging that what we are doing now is not enough. It means choosing to protect lives over convenience. It means saying clearly that driving under the influence will not be tolerated, minimized, or excused.

Jamari's name should not only be associated with how he died, but with how many lives are saved because action was finally taken. His life mattered. His future mattered. And his legacy should be one of protection, accountability, and justice.

I urge you to support and pass Jamari's Law. Let Maryland be a state that acts before another family experiences this pain. Let Jamari's life mean something lasting.

Respectfully,

Dana Goldsby
[City/County], Maryland

MGA letter Jamari's Law 2026.pdf

Uploaded by: Francine Clark

Position: FAV

Maryland General Assembly Letter/Testimony

Subject: Testimony SB# 0066: JAMARI'S LAW

To: The Honorable Members of the Senate

From: Francine Clark, Resident of District 29

Date: January 20, 2026

1. Opening & Identification:

- My name is Francine Clark, and I live in Solomons, Maryland, in District 29
- I am writing in strong support of Senate Bill SB# 0066, **JAMARI'S LAW**

2. My Connection & Why It Matters:

- I would like to thank the Judicial Committee, sponsored by Senator West and Senator Bailey for your support of Jamari's Law.
- As a family member, a mother and grandmother, this bill directly impacts my family and community because I have worked with young people at my church and local youth center for the past 25 years. I have taught drug and alcohol prevention and have seen first-hand through prevention training; the impact drinking and driving has had on our young people from both sides... the offender and the victim.
- Jamari's immediate family have suffered not only from Jamari's untimely death, but also from the anxiety this current sentencing laws allows for offenders who drive while drunk cause a fatality(s). It's a slap on the wrist for the offender, but also feel like a slap in the face of family and friends of the victim(s).

3. Specific Points & Impact:

- Passing SB#0066 is crucial because it ensures that sentencing is commensurate with the crime. This allows for some closure for the victim's family.
- Fatalities in Maryland vs National percentages is 5.1% above the National average.
Maryland 36.7% vs National 31.8 according to the 2022 Alcohol-Impaired Driving Fatality Data. (source - Responsibility.org)
- "The current law which only sentences a drunk driver to 10 years max and allows the offenders to serve only 25% of their sentencing 2.5% which is 2.5 years and

even less for time served. This is unacceptable because it allows the offender to return to his/her life more quickly with insufficient time needed for remorse and rehabilitation making him/her more likely to be a repeat offender.

4. Conclusion & Call to Action:

- I urge you to vote in favor of Bill #0066 **JAMARI'S LAW**. Don't let Jamari's life have ended without the proper justice that will benefit all Marylanders.
 - Thank you for your time and consideration in addressing this vital issue **JAMARI'S LAW** for ALL Marylanders.
-

Eldridge_Testimony_SB0066.pdf

Uploaded by: Geoffrey Eldridge

Position: FAV

Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee:

My name is Geoff Eldridge, I am a resident of St. Mary's County, and I am writing to urge you to move SB0066, known as Jamari's Law, forward with a favorable recommendation.

I knew Jamari Duckett. He attended Great Mills High School with my eldest daughter, and worked at a local dining establishment I frequented. Jamari was an amazing individual whose light shined brightly—an individual who would have gone out into the world and made it a better place than he already had. Yet, his life was snuffed out prematurely.

Another devastating blow came to all who knew Jamari, when we were denied justice due to the inexplicably lenient laws of this state with respect to manslaughter by vehicle.

Jamari's Law is thoughtful and measured legislation that if passed gives the judiciary discretion to make the sentence imposed fit the circumstances of the case at hand. This law merely expands the range of the sentence that can be imposed upon an individual who commits the crime of manslaughter by vehicle.

This law is the correct response to a tragic loss of a young man who still had much to give the world. Jamari's father, John, and our community could have authored a law that sought retribution by demanding longer sentences, and that factors such as speed, and blood alcohol content be weighed in sentencing. Instead, we have chosen this measured approach that allows for a longer sentence to be imposed when circumstances demand such in the pursuit of justice.

No amount of lauding Jamari can do the light that shone from Jamari justice. No father, family member, friend or classmate should experience the injustice our community has endured. This law should be the lasting change to the world, Jamari Duckett was denied the opportunity to make during his life. I call upon this committee to release Jamari's Law to the General Assembly with a favorable recommendation.

Respectfully submitted,

Geoffrey T. Eldridge
Piney Point, Maryland

Jamaris Law 2025.pdf

Uploaded by: Idelsa Perez-Rodriguez

Position: FAV

**To: The Senate Judicial Proceeding
Committee**

From: Idelsa Perez-Rodriguez

Date: January 20, 2025

Position: SUPPORT

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of Senate Bill 66 (JAMARIS LAW) . My name is Idelsa, and I am a resident of St. Marys County. I am here to urge you to pass this legislation to ensure that drunk drivers who endanger our lives face consequences that reflect the severity of their actions. If you look at statistics, it has been proven that drunk drivers will repeat their poor choices. According to MADD in 2024 there were 12,429 alcohol impaired fatalities. 12,429 where families were destroyed and left emotionally and financially drained.

Current sentencing laws do not reflect the severity of drunk driving. Lengthening the sentencing will protect our future from repeat offenders and instill an outlook that says we do NOT STAND with drunk driving as a small offense, there is nothing small about taking a life where a different choice could have kept everyone safe. With this bill we can send a message that we will no longer tolerate this wreckless and deadly behavior.

Thank you for giving me this opportunity.

Respectfully ,

Idelsa Perez-Rodriguez

SenatorBailey_FAV_SB66.pdf

Uploaded by: Jack Bailey

Position: FAV

JACK BAILEY
Legislative District 29
Calvert and St. Mary's Counties

Budget & Taxation Committee



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

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240-309-4238

January 22, 2026

Senate Bill 66 – Manslaughter by Vehicle or Vessel – Increased Penalties (Jamari's Law)

Dear Chair Smith and Members of the Committee:

I am writing to express my strong support for Senate Bill 66, which would raise the maximum penalties for causing the death of another as a result of the person's driving, operating, or controlling a vehicle or vessel in a grossly negligent manner.

This legislation is named Jamari's Law for Jamari Duckett, who was a resident of St. Mary's County. In 2022, Jamari was the victim of a car accident caused by a driver who was drunk and traveling at a high rate of speed. According to the investigation, immediately prior to the accident, the drunk driver was driving at speeds between 76 and 91 miles per hour on a road where the speed limit is 40 miles per hour. Jamari tragically died as a result of the injuries he sustained in this accident. He was 18 years old.

The St. Mary's County State's Attorney's Office successfully prosecuted the drunk driver in this case, who was sentenced to the maximum penalty of 10 years. As this is considered a non-violent offense, it is possible for this individual to serve about a quarter of their sentence in prison. This means that, when considering diminution credits and the possibility of parole, the offender could be released in as little as 2½ years. I believe that this is far too short a time for the crime of manslaughter by vehicle or vessel.

I believe this legislation will continue the work that we have done to combat drunk driving in Maryland. Having served as the primary sponsor of this legislation in previous years, I have seen how many families in Maryland have been affected by tragedies caused by the reckless decisions of another driver and have been deeply moved by their advocacy on this issue. I am proud to co-sponsor this legislation to make our roads safer in support of Jamari's family and all Maryland families who have suffered such a tragedy, and I thank Senator West for introducing this legislation this year.

I respectfully request a favorable report on Senate Bill 66. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Bailey".

Senator Jack Bailey

Jamari law testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Jacqueline Cosner

Position: FAV

Testimony of Jacki Cosner
In support of Jamari's Law 2026

My name is Jacki Cosner and I am submitting my testimony in honor of my daughter and son in law, Kayla and Daniel Amos, who were killed by a driver under the influence on February 14th, 2016. They were just 20/21 and out to celebrate a day full of love and their 6 month wedding anniversary and the beginning of a life together they had planned with the joy and vitality of young adults and the minds and hearts ahead of their time. Kayla had just finished a 4 yr degree at Liberty University, in just 2 yrs, and Magna Cum Laude of her class with hopes of opening her own coffee shop. Dan was pursuing his passion and working in ministries at their church. But their future was cut short on that Sunday evening when they did not reach their house, but they did go home to the Father.

After a night of indulging and no sleep, this person made the decision to drive and ended up hitting my children in a head on collision as she dozed at the wheel. Their car was flipped and both trapped. Dan died at the scene and Kayla was flown out to Baltimore. After finally making the 2 hour drive to see her, we were lead into a small room and told it was not a survivable injury. Only medical science was keeping her alive and after several hours we made the decision to give Dan back the hand we had just given him with our blessing, just 6 months earlier.

Over the next few months we learned things that made our shattered hearts go from sorrow to rage. The future of these two young newlyweds, our children, had been taken by someone with a history of substance abuse and vehicular incidents. Several stints in rehab over the years and recent run-ins with police in driving situations in December and January with basic slaps on the wrists after both of those encounters, she did not think twice about getting behind the wheel of a 5000lb weapon ultimately taking the lives of two innocent victims.

After six months in a detention center, she was released on home arrest with an ankle monitor. When we finally went to sentencing, she accepted a plea citing "first time offense". Technically yes, first time she killed, but should that even be a guideline? How many times before we say enough and they are held accountable to full extent? Well she was given a max of 10 yrs for each victim, suspended 6 of each, so sentenced to a total of 8 yrs in prison which she served 4 of after good behavior. And one of those was the combined 12 months of detention center and home arrest as that is considered by the state as incarceration. She entered Jessup prison on June 10th, 2017 and was released on March 3, 2020 with 5 yrs of probation. That is over now for her and her life continues while I struggle to accept 10 yrs without my daughter and son in law. And that will never change.

I ask that you be change and pass Jamari's Law and hold accountable those that do not have the common consideration of others on the road. Hold accountable those that feel they are invincible. Hold accountable those that feel personal decisions have no bearing on those around them. The person that killed my children was asked by a friend on February 12th if she had killed anyone yet making bad decisions...two days later she did. Something must be done to make them think twice before turning a car into a possible weapon. I ask and pray you "seek justice" for actions, "have Mercy" for those needing help, "walk humbly" knowing you made a decision that assures others see that no one is beyond the unthinkable. No one is invincible.

COOPER - WRITTEN TESTIMONY In Favor of Jamari's La

Uploaded by: Jennifer Cooper

Position: FAV

WRITTEN TESTIMONY: Senate Bill 66 “Jamari’s Law”

To: Maryland General Assembly
From: Jennifer Cooper, Maryland Resident (20619)
Re: Jamari’s Law, Senate Bill 66
Date: January 20, 2026

To the Maryland General Assembly:

On April 22, 2024, my cousin – Gary Alan Cooper – lost his life instantly at the intersection of Route 301 and Acton Lane in Waldorf, Maryland, due to Gross Vehicular Manslaughter at the hands of Stacy Jermaine Barksdale, a man with a *previous history of multiple driving impaired convictions*. Barksdale, who had methamphetamine, marijuana, and a .15 alcohol content in his system at the time of his lethal actions, was sentenced to 15 years with all but 12 years suspended, plus 5 years of probation upon release.

In addition to killing my cousin, Barksdale permanently injured and disabled Gary’s long-time partner, Denise Kesterson (who was driving their vehicle), who continues to endure multiple surgeries, unbearable pain, and financial hardship, not to mention the unimaginable loss of her life-long partner.

It is absurd to me that a person who has repeatedly driven under the influence, with evidentiary criminal convictions, enjoyed the privilege of continuing said criminal behavior, resulting in the DEATH of an innocent person, and will still *rejoin free society just 10 years from now*, while my cousin remains buried in the ground, his partner remains permanently disabled, and our family continues to grieve.

I imagine that Jamari Duckett’s family feels a similar weight and sense of injustice in regard to their horrifically similar loss. That is why I am in full favor of Senate Bill 66 “Jamari’s Law” which would increase the maximum penalty for vehicular manslaughter from 10 to 20 years, and 15 to 30 years for any subsequent conviction.

This action is long overdue. Please do the right thing.

Sincerely,



Jennifer Cooper
Maryland Resident
California, MD 20619
jacindigowave@gmail.com

Jamaris Law John Duckett Testimony 2026.pdf

Uploaded by: John Duckett

Position: FAV

John Duckett
Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 0066
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
January 22, 2026

John Duckett
Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 0066
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
January 22, 2026

My name is John Duckett. I'm here today not as an advocate or a policy expert, but as a father whose life was forever changed.

In July of 2022, my son, Jamari Duckett, was killed when a drunk driver, with a blood alcohol level of .13, traveling between 75 and 90 miles per hour in a 40-mile-per-hour zone, slammed into the back of Jamari's vehicle. My son succumbed to his injuries the next day. Jamari's killer was given the maximum sentence of 10 years for his crime, an insufficient sentence for a life stolen. To make matters worse, because DUI Manslaughter is not considered a "violent crime," the man who killed Jamari was released after serving just 2 years of his 10-year sentence. The man who killed my son was released in November 2025 and is now free to live the rest of his life, while I sit here asking lawmakers to right this wrong. For a family shattered forever, that is not justice. It feels like a slap on the wrist for a tragedy that never ends.

Jamari was vibrant, kind, and full of promise. He had dreams, plans, and a future that will never be realized. In one reckless decision, all of that was taken away.

That's why I am asking you to support Senate Bill 0066, Jamari's Law. Jamari's law would increase the maximum sentence for DUI manslaughter from 10 to 20 years for a first conviction and from 15 to 30 years for repeat offenders or those with serious prior convictions. This is not about revenge; it's about accountability. It's about acknowledging the true gravity of taking a human life.

No law, no sentence, will ever bring my son back. But Jamari's Law can save lives. It can send a clear message that drunk driving is not an accident, it is a choice, and choices have consequences.

Please honor Jamari's life, and the lives of so many others, by supporting SB 0066. Let's work together to prevent other families from experiencing this kind of unbearable loss.

Thank you for your time, and for listening to my story.

Jamri's Law_Witness_Brooks.pdf

Uploaded by: Keith Brooks

Position: FAV

Keith A Brooks
44478 Moss Ct. Callaway, MD 20620
January 20, 2026

To:

Judiciary Committee
Maryland General Assembly

**Re: Testimony Regarding Proposed Changes to Penalties for
Manslaughter by Vehicle or Vessel (Gross Negligence)**

Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony regarding the proposed amendments to Maryland's penalties for manslaughter by vehicle or vessel involving gross negligence. I appreciate the committee's continued work examining matters of public safety, justice, and accountability on Maryland roadways and waterways. I am in favor of Maryland adopting Jamari's law. There are too many innocent lives being lost due to the actions of individuals who do not value the life of others, evident by their actions.

Under current Maryland law, manslaughter by vehicle or vessel involving gross negligence is a felony punishable by up to 10 years of incarceration and/or a fine of up to \$5,000. For individuals with a prior conviction involving similar offenses, including manslaughter by vehicle or vessel (gross or criminal negligence), homicide by motor vehicle while under the influence, or life-threatening injury by motor vehicle while impaired, the maximum penalty increases to up to 15 years and/or a fine of up to \$10,000.

The bill under consideration proposes increasing these maximum penalties to 20 years for a first conviction and 30 years for a subsequent conviction. This proposed change raises important questions about proportionality, deterrence, sentencing consistency, and the seriousness with which the State responds to incidents involving grossly negligent operation of a vehicle or vessel resulting in loss of life.

The committee may wish to consider how the proposed changes align with:

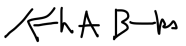
- Existing sentencing structures for comparable offenses in Maryland;
- The need for accountability in cases involving severe negligence leading to fatalities;
- The importance of ensuring sentencing options that reflect the gravity of harm suffered by victims and their families;
- Maryland's broader public-safety and traffic-safety goals.

I appreciate the committee's attention to these issues and your commitment to thorough review of the potential impacts, legal, social, and practical; of modifying the sentencing framework for this category of offenses. Please adopt this law!

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Keith A Brooks

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Keith A Brooks". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly stylized font.

SB 66 - favorable - Jamari's Law.pdf

Uploaded by: Kirsten Brown

Position: FAV

Ivan Bates
President



Kirsten N. Brown
Coordinator

Maryland State's Attorneys' Association
3300 North Ridge Road, Suite 185
Ellicott City, Maryland 21043
kbrown@mdsaa.org ~ 301-748-1312

DATE: January 16, 2026

BILL NUMBER: SB 66

POSITION: Favorable

The Maryland State's Attorneys' Association (MSAA) supports Senate Bill 66 – Jamari's Law – and urges this Committee to issue a favorable report.

Jamari's Law remedies a startling injustice that exists in Maryland law, one that trivializes the killing of another if caused by grossly negligent conduct behind the wheel of an automobile, by increasing the maximum penalties available to a sentencing court. The urgent need for this legislation was recognized last session when it was passed by the Senate, not just with bipartisan support but unanimously.

Grossly negligent manslaughter by motor vehicle requires the State to prove that a defendant has engaged in conduct that is of extreme or outrageous character and evinces a wanton or reckless disregard for human life – this is conduct that truly shocks the conscience, and is so far removed from the realm of ordinary civil negligence. Reported opinions discussing this offense examine scenarios like street racing in and out of traffic at speeds exceeding 100 miles per hour,¹ or a particularly tragic case in which a driver struck a pedestrian pushing a stroller with her three-year-old grandchild, and then dragged that stroller for another half mile.²

When viewed in light of the extreme conduct required to support a conviction, the current maximum penalty for grossly negligent manslaughter by motor vehicle – ten years – is plainly inadequate, particularly because it is considered “nonviolent” for the purposes of parole eligibility, meaning that individuals convicted of this offense become eligible for release on parole after having served only 25% of their sentence. Treating this offense like misdemeanor assault (a crime which requires proof only of a harmful or offensive physical contact but carries an identical maximum penalty) or burglary of a storehouse (which not only carries a more severe maximum penalty, but is also treated as a violent crime for the purposes of parole eligibility, requiring service of 50% of the sentence before consideration for release) is insulting to families of victims after they've lost their loved one in a preventable and senseless tragedy.

When a jury finds beyond a reasonable doubt that a defendant has engaged in conduct that constitutes grossly negligent manslaughter by motor vehicle, courts need more in order to

fashion a sentence that more closely approximates justice; MSAA is again urging this Committee's support for this critical bill.

1 *Henson v. State*, 133 Md. App. 156 (2000).

2 *DeHogue v. State*, 190 Md. App. 532 (2010).

26 legis md vehicular manslaughter senate.pdf

Uploaded by: Kurt Erickson

Position: FAV

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Linda Williams, Vice Chairman
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Commission for Advancing Alcohol Responsibility
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Captain J.P. H. Koushel
Virginia State Police
Freddy Martinez
Hammond City Public Schools
Holly Masterson, M.A., LPC
Sue-lynn LLC
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Murdock Company, Inc.
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Arlington Police Department
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Tom Trzost
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Chris Vardachia
Gary Davis Goff
Nate Erickson
WRAP President & CEO



WASHINGTON REGIONAL ALCOHOL PROGRAM

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January 22, 2026

**Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee
Maryland Senate
Annapolis, Maryland**

Re.: Support of "Manslaughter by Vehicle or Vessel – Increased Penalties (Jamari's Law)," Senate Bill 66, Senators Bailey (R-Calvert & St. Mary's Counties) and West (R-Baltimore & Carroll Counties)

Dear Senators:

On behalf of the Maryland nonprofit Washington Regional Alcohol Program's (WRAP) Board of Directors, staff, volunteers and the more than six-million Maryland residents we serve in the fight against drunk driving and underage drinking (including having served as project director of both Maryland's Checkpoint Strikeforce campaign and "Maryland Remembers" ceremony), I wanted to formally communicate to you **WRAP's unequivocal support for Senate Bill 66, "Manslaughter by Vehicle or Vessel – Increased Penalties (Jamari's Law)," Senators Bailey (R-Calvert & St. Mary's Counties) and West (Baltimore & Carroll Counties).**

Succinctly, Senate Bill 66 – in an effort to counter existing Maryland sentencing guidelines for vehicular manslaughter which result in ineffectual, remarkably low imprisonment sentences -- increases the "maximum periods of imprisonment" for persons convicted of vehicular manslaughter including for those convicted of such and having been previously convicted of a number of crimes including driving under the influence of alcohol, driving while impaired by alcohol or driving while impaired by drugs or controlled dangerous substances (Maryland Transportation Section 21-902 [a][b][c] & [d]).

(over)



With over a quarter of Maryland's traffic fatalities involving impaired drivers (27.6%, Maryland Highway Safety Office, 2019-2023 [five-year average]), meaningful deterrents and penalties for persons driving negligently and causing either death or serious injury of another are both paramount and overdue.

As a means of better equating the sentence with the *lethal* crime, WRAP supports Senate Bill 66 and urges your consideration of again favorably reporting said legislation.

□□□□□

Thank you, in advance, for your consideration. I may be directly reached with any questions at either 703-893-0461 or at kurt@wrap.org.

Cordially,



Kurt Gregory Erickson
President

Lachelle Duckett Written Testimony in Favor of Ja

Uploaded by: Lachelle Duckett

Position: FAV

Lachelle Duckett
18520 Premier Lane
Lexington Park, Maryland 20653
January 19, 2026

The Maryland General Assembly
Miller State Office Building
6 Bladen St.
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Senators and Members of the Committee,

I am in favor of Senate Bill 0066. "Jamari's Law"

My name is Lachelle Duckett. I am the wife of John Duckett and Jamari Duckett was my Bonus son. No family should ever have to endure a lifelong sentence of losing a loved one at the hands of a drunk driver. And if, GOD forbid, it does happen, the family should **at least** get justice from the Court System.

The current Maryland State laws do not allow justice. The current Maryland State law is just a **Slap on the Wrist**. Installing a interlock system in a car is not a strong enough punishment. It's only preventive maintenance....just like a colonoscopy doesn't cure cancer; a blower doesn't cure drunk driving. At least, **Jamari's Law** will increase the penalties and allow the Judges to give longer sentences.

I have been here through it all, the tragedy of losing Jamari, watching the devastation of the family, the court dates to try to get the driver sentenced, the court dates trying to keep the driver incarcerated. And the 3 year struggle to get this **common sense** law passed. Every family deserves justice when a life is loss due to the negligence and irresponsibly of someone else.

Jamari's Law is not just about drunk driving. **Jamari's Law** is about drunk drivers that **KILL**.

NO MORE SLAPS ON THE WRIST!!!

I ask you, as an elected official and a voice for the people of the State of Maryland, to **vote in favor** of **Senate Bill 0066/Jamari's Law**.

Sincerely,
Lachelle Duckett

Letter in support SB66.pdf

Uploaded by: Laura Wilt

Position: FAV



Maryland Crime Victims' Resource Center, Inc.

Continuing the Missions of the Stephanie Roper Committee and Foundation, Inc.

☎ 877-VICTIM-1 (877-842-8461) ✉ mail@mdcrimevictims.org 🌐 mdcrimevictims.org

LETTER IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 66

January 20, 2026

Headquarters

1001 Prince George's Boulevard
Suite 750
Upper Marlboro, MD 20774
301-952-0063
877-842-8461 (toll free)
240-929-0526 (fax)

Baltimore

1 North Charles Street
Suite 700
Baltimore, MD 21201

**Carroll, Howard, &
Baltimore Counties**

Oakland Manor
5430 Vantage Point Road
Columbia, MD 21044
240-335-4032

Eastern Shore

240-335-4012

**Frederick &
Montgomery Counties**

240-335-4021

Southern Maryland

301-952-0063

Western Maryland

59 Prospect Square
Suite 6
Cumberland, MD 21502
240-335-4013

On behalf of the Maryland Crime Victims' Resource Center (MCVRC), I urge your support for Senate Bill 66 Jamari's Law. MCVRC provides legal services for crime victims throughout Maryland and is the largest nonprofit of its kind in the country. We write on behalf of our clients whose family members have been victims of vehicular manslaughter.

Senate Bill 66 should receive support from both sides of the political aisle. It allows the court to impose more serious penalties as appropriate when a person is convicted of vehicular manslaughter but does not mandate a minimum sentence. Senate Bill 66 allows a court to review the particular facts of each case to impose an appropriate sentence. The current maximum sentence of ten years does not allow our courts to address the most serious of these crimes. Twenty years give the courts a larger range of possible sentences, recognizing the vastly differing circumstances of every vehicular manslaughter offense.

Maryland's Highway Safety Office and the National Highway Traffic Safety Association (NHTSA) publish data concerning the traffic fatalities in Maryland and across the country. The number of people in our state killed by reckless and dangerous driving is immense. 621 traffic fatalities were counted in Maryland in 2023 including 577 separate crashes. 35% of those crashes involved a driver with alcohol in their system. (<https://www.fars.nhtsa.dot.gov/States/StatesCrashesAndAllVictims.aspx> <https://zerodeathsmd.gov/resources/crashdata/>)

Senate Bill 66 will allow the most serious cases to be appropriately sentenced. On behalf of Maryland victims, we ask you to pass Senate Bill 66. Our advocates regularly hear from survivors who feel that current penalties do not reflect the gravity of the harm they have suffered. This is a small way Maryland can work towards restoring confidence in the justice system and improve community safety.

Please vote in favor of Senate Bill 66. This vote will support those who have lost family members to the dangerous driving of others.

Sincerely,

Laura Corbett Wilt, Senior Supervising Attorney
202-335-4004; lwilt@mdcrimevictims.org

Joined by: Joanna Mupanduki, Deputy Director & Kurt Wolfgang, Executive Director

Support

Uploaded by: Leslie Everett

Position: FAV

Statement of Support for SB0066

My name is Leslie Everett, and I fully support the passage of SB0066.

Those who consume alcohol make a conscious decision to do so. With that decision comes the responsibility to plan for safe transportation and to never place others at risk. The driver in this case made a series of deliberate choices: the choice to consume alcohol, the choice to become impaired, and ultimately, the choice to get behind the wheel.

That final decision resulted in the murder of Jamari.

Jamari's life was taken because of preventable, reckless behavior. This was not an accident—it was the direct consequence of conscious, irresponsible actions. Far too many families in Maryland have lost loved ones to impaired driving, tragedies that could have been entirely avoided. The solution is simple: do not drink and drive.

Maryland's current laws regarding vehicular crimes involving impaired drivers fail to reflect the severity of these offenses. They do not fit the crime that was knowingly committed. Jamari's life was priceless to all who knew and loved him, yet under current law, the individual responsible may face a maximum sentence of ten years—and potentially serve only days or a few years with good behavior. This is a slap in the face to victims' families and undermines the value of human life.

While nothing will ever bring Jamari—or the many others before him—back, it is long past time for Maryland to strengthen its laws and hold impaired drivers fully accountable for the devastation they cause.

I urge you to pass SB0066.

Respectfully,
Leslie Everett

RG - SB0066.pdf

Uploaded by: Russell Gilbert

Position: FAV

I am writing to express my support for Senate Bill SB0066 Manslaughter by Vehicle or Vessel – Increased Penalties (Jamari’s Law). I believe this legislation is important for our community and will hopefully make drunk driving less socially acceptable and punish individuals who irresponsibly make the choice to drive impaired.

Thank you for your consideration.

v/r,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Russell Gilbert". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first letter of each word being capitalized and larger than the others.

Russell Gilbert

California, MD

Untitled document.pdf

Uploaded by: Shameka Stevens

Position: FAV

I am in favor of this bill because a young life—one that was just beginning—was lost as a direct result of an adult's decision to drink alcohol and drive. There must be meaningful consequences that prioritize public safety and protect our community, while also sending a clear message that drinking and driving will not be tolerated. Far too many lives in our community have been lost due to irresponsible choices like these. I hope this bill becomes law and encourages not only those who choose to drink, but also those around them, to seriously consider how their actions—or lack of action—can lead to irreversible, life-altering tragedies..

JAMARIS LAW TESTIMONY.pdf

Uploaded by: Shayla Reve

Position: FAV

My name is Shayla Ratliff, and I am submitting this testimony in strong support of Senate Bill 0066, also known as Jamari's Law.

I am submitting this testimony in honor of my late stepbrother, whose life was taken as a result of vehicular manslaughter. Our family lives every day with the reality that a loved one is gone forever, while the person responsible faced consequences that did not reflect the severity or permanence of that loss.

Manslaughter by vehicle is not a "simple accident." When reckless, negligent, or unlawful behavior behind the wheel results in someone's death, the impact is devastating and irreversible. Families are left with grief, trauma, and unanswered questions, while current penalties too often fail to reflect the seriousness of the harm caused.

SB0066 is an important and necessary step toward accountability. Increasing the maximum penalties for manslaughter by vehicle or vessel sends a clear message that Maryland takes these crimes seriously and values the lives lost. It also recognizes that repeat offenders and individuals with prior related convictions pose a greater risk to public safety and should face consequences that reflect that risk.

Jamari's Law is not about revenge, this is about justice, responsibility, and prevention. Stronger penalties can help deter reckless behavior, encourage safer choices, and acknowledge the profound loss experienced by victims' families. No law can bring my stepbrother back, but this legislation can help prevent other families from experiencing the same pain.

I respectfully urge the Judicial Proceedings Committee to issue a favorable report on SB0066 and help ensure that Maryland's laws better reflect the value of human life and the seriousness of vehicular manslaughter.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Shayla Ratliff

Testimony in Support of Jamari's Law 1-2.pdf

Uploaded by: Edward Gardner

Position: FWA

Testimony in Support of Jamari's Law

Submitted by: The Husband of Jaleisa Wilcox

Honorable Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Edward Gardner and I am here today as the **husband of Jaleisa Wilcox**, the **father of her four children**, and a **Maryland business owner** who must now raise our family without my wife.

Jaleisa was my partner in life, in parenting, and in business. She was the mother of our four children and a hardworking business owner who relied on Maryland's roadways every day as a passage for work and providing for her family. That roadway should have been safe.

Instead, through reckless and preventable behavior, my wife's life was taken.

What has been most difficult for our family is not only the loss itself, but what we learned about how the system responded afterward. **While the investigation into the collision that killed my wife was still pending — while charges were still being considered — the same individual responsible was ticketed again for another speeding infraction.**

That fact alone speaks volumes about the gaps in accountability that currently exist. A human life had already been taken, yet dangerous behavior continued without meaningful consequence. For our family, it felt as though my wife's life was treated as a traffic incident rather than the loss of a human being.

That is why we **support Jamari's Law**, while we would like to explore the options to reclassify these types of driving offenses as a violent crime when a life is lost in the commission of another crime.

For example Drinking And Driving, Speeding involved fatalities over 25 mph.

Jamari's Law recognizes that when someone chooses to drive recklessly or negligently and a life is lost, the consequences must reflect the seriousness of that harm. By increasing the maximum penalties for vehicular manslaughter from 10 years to 20, Jamari's Law gives judges the discretion to impose sentences that better match the devastation left behind and a true value of time for a human life.

Under current law, the person responsible for my wife's death was treated as a **non-violent offender**, despite the fact that our children will grow up without their mother and our family business was forever changed. Jamari's Law begins to correct that imbalance and sends a clear message that reckless driving that results in death is not a minor traffic offense.

We are not seeking revenge. We are seeking **accountability, deterrence, and public safety for all communities across our great state of Maryland**. No family should have to sit in a courtroom knowing a life was lost, while watching the system allow repeated dangerous behavior to continue unchecked.

As a husband, a father, and a Maryland business owner who still must use these same roads every day, I urge you to support Jamari's Law. Let Maryland's laws reflect the value of human life and the responsibility that comes with operating a vehicle on our shared roadways.

Thank you for your time, for listening to our story, and for honoring the memory of my wife,
Jaleisa Wilcox.

Respectfully,

Edward Gardner

Husband of Jaleisa Wilcox

Father of Her Children

Maryland Business Owner

OPD Testimony Unfavorable_SB66_Jamari's Law.pdf

Uploaded by: Krystal Williams

Position: UNF



NATASHA DARTIGUE
PUBLIC DEFENDER

KEITH LOTRIDGE
DEPUTY PUBLIC DEFENDER

ELIZABETH HILLIARD
DIRECTOR OF GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

POSITION ON PROPOSED LEGISLATION

BILL: Senate Bill 66 – Criminal Law – Manslaughter by Vehicle or Vessel – Increased Penalties (Jamari’s Law)

FROM: Maryland Office of the Public Defender

POSITION: Unfavorable

DATE: 01/22/2026 – Senate Judicial Proceedings Bill Hearing

The Maryland Office of the Public Defender respectfully requests that the Judicial Proceedings Committee issue an unfavorable report on Senate Bill 66.

Senate Bill 66 *doubles* the maximum statutory penalty for a first conviction for manslaughter by vehicle by increasing the penalty from 10 to 20 years. For a second, subsequent conviction, the bill *doubles* the penalty from 15 to 30 years.

Under existing law, prosecutors can charge someone with vehicular homicide if they drove in a manner that was “grossly negligent” and killed someone. So, an alleged perpetrator need not have intended to kill, need not have planned to kill, and need not have acted with malice aforethought to be convicted. Yet, under current law, someone may be sentenced to 10 years for a first offense and 15 years for a second, successive, offense. Even granting, for present purposes, that statutory maximum sentences are seldom served in their entirety, it is difficult to conceive of the societal value served by doubling the potential period of incarceration someone might be sentenced to for *accidentally* causing the death of another.

For these reasons, the Maryland Office of the Public Defender urges this Committee to issue an unfavorable report on SB 66.

Submitted by: Government Relations Division of the Maryland Office of the Public Defender.