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OF THE BLIND
MARYLAND

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From: Ronza Othman, President
National Federation of the Blind of Maryland
15 Charles Plaza, #3002
Baltimore, MD 21201 president@nfbmd.org

To: Senate Committee on Judicial Proceedings

The members of the National Federation of the Blind of Maryland urge the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee to give a favorable report with amendment to HB0367. This bill prohibits pedestrians in Wicomico County from standing in a roadway, shoulder, median divide, or intersection determined by the county or a municipal corporation in the county to be inherently dangerous. It also prohibits police officers from issuing citations for violations unless certain conditions are met.

The bill as written is problematic because blind and low-vision pedestrians are not able to see the required signage designating an inherently dangerous roadway, shoulder, median divide, or intersection. Many intersections do not have sidewalks or proper curb cuts, so it can be difficult for a blind pedestrian to find an appropriate place to stand while listening for traffic patterns in order to determine whether or when it is safe to enter the intersection. In addition, without audio pedestrian signals that count down the pedestrian crossing time for an intersection, blind pedestrians have no way of knowing how much time they have to cross the intersection; as a result, they often must stop in a median if the traffic pattern changes before they are able to safely complete a crossing. We note that the Maryland White Cane Law already requires drivers to yield to blind and low-vision pedestrians. This bill should be amended to include in the conditions under which a citation may not be issued that the pedestrian is blind or has low vision.

For these reasons, we ask for a favorable report conditional on the above amendment on SB0367. For questions, please contact me at President@nfbmd.org or at 443-426-4110.