



URGENT: Action Needed to Defeat Motorcycle Helmet Repeal Bill

Background on Status of Maryland SB 712 and Past Legislation to Repeal the All-Rider Helmet Requirement:

The effort to repeal Maryland's all-rider helmet law has been consistently considered in the Maryland General Assembly over the past several sessions. This year, the bill (SB 712) has 10 sponsors, including three members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee (SJPC). The SJPC is holding a hearing to consider SB 712 on Tuesday, February 23, at 1:00 p.m. Several stakeholders have provided testimony in opposition including public health and safety groups, medical professionals, families of crash victims, researchers, and motorcyclists. Following the SJPC hearing, a vote will be scheduled to take place during a committee voting session. Last year, the bill was given an unfavorable vote with a slim margin of five to six. [Here](#) is the testimony Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety (Advocates) jointly submitted along with the Maryland State Council of the Emergency Nurses Association and the Partnership for a Safer Maryland. Here is our [motorcycle helmet fact sheet](#).

Need to Contact Members of the SJPC and Urge them to Oppose SB 712 Before February 23rd:

We need your help. Please contact the SJPC members and urge them to oppose this dangerous legislation. Members denoted with a single asterisk (*) are sponsors of the legislation and members denoted with a double asterisk (**) voted favorably on the legislation last session (Sens. Cassilly and Hough are in both categories, denoted with a triple asterisk (***)).

- **Chair: Sen. William Smith, Jr. (D-20), Montgomery County, will.smith@senate.state.md.us, 410-841-3634
- Vice Chair: Sen. Jeff Waldstreicher (D-18), Montgomery County, jeff.waldstreicher@senate.state.md.us, 410-841-3137
- Sen. Jill Carter (D-41), Baltimore City, jill.carter@senate.state.md.us, 410-841-3697
- Sen. Shelly Hettleman (D-11), Baltimore County, shelly.hettleman@senate.state.md.us, 410-841-3131
- Sen. Michael Jackson (D-27), Prince George's, Charles, and Calvert Counties, Michael.jackson@senate.state.md.us, 410-841-3700
- Sen. Charles Sydnor, III (D-44), Baltimore City and Baltimore County, Charles.sydnor@senate.state.md.us, 410-841-3612
- Sen. Susan Lee (D-16), Montgomery County, susan.lee@senate.state.md.us, 410-841-3124
- *Sen. Jack Bailey (R-29), Calvert and St. Mary's Counties, jack.bailey@senate.state.md.us, 410-841-3673
- ***Sen. Robert Cassilly (R-34), Hartford County, bob.cassilly@senate.state.md.us, 410-841-3158
- ***Sen. Michael Hough (R-4), Frederick and Carroll Counties, Michael.hough@senate.state.md.us, 410-841-3704
- **Sen. Chris West (R-42), Baltimore County, chris.west@senate.state.md.us, 410-841-3648

Talking Points:

- For over 26 years, Maryland's all-rider helmet law has been preventing deaths and injuries and saving taxpayer dollars in the state. Repealing this critical law would be a deadly and costly mistake.
- In 2019, 75 motorcycle riders died on Maryland roads, a 21 percent increase over the prior year. Repealing Maryland's all-rider motorcycle helmet law is contrary to the urgent need to improve motorcycle rider safety as well as the state's *Vision Zero* efforts.
- If SB 712 is passed, it will result in more deaths, injuries, and pain and suffering of crash victims' loved ones, as well as an increased financial burden on Maryland's emergency services, hospitals, Medicaid and ultimately, every Maryland taxpayer.
- Last year, despite reduced traffic on roadways due to COVID-19 restrictions, virtual workplaces and social distancing, risky driving behaviors including speeding, impairment and lack of seat belt use spiked in the first nine months according to data from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). Sharp increases in distracted driving have been reported as well.

- Given the ongoing burdens and capacity constraints experienced by our health care system in response to the deadly pandemic, we must do all we can to keep road users safe and out of emergency rooms. Removing this critical safety protection for motorcycle riders, especially at a time when conditions on our roads have become even more dangerous, will result in more encumbrances on our over-worked first responders, emergency room (ER) nurses and ER doctors.
- Motorcycle helmets are proven lifesavers and injury preventers. According to a report by the Government Accountability Office (GAO), laws requiring all motorcyclists to wear helmets are the only strategy proven to be effective in reducing motorcyclist fatalities.
- After Maryland enacted its all-rider motorcycle helmet law in 1992, the death rate from motorcycle crashes dropped 56 percent (per 10,000 registered motorcycles) over a five-year period.
- Comparisons with Pennsylvania and Delaware:
 - Maryland’s all-rider helmet requirement is working to ensure motorcycle helmet use. Nationally, unhelmeted motorcyclists make up about 39 percent of all motorcyclist fatalities when helmet use is known. In Maryland, this average is 15 percent, whereas in the neighboring states without such a law, the average was significantly higher – 53 percent in Pennsylvania and 41 percent in Delaware.
 - Getting all motorcyclists to wear helmets is a prudent and fiscally responsible goal. Helmet use also reduces expenses to states, with Maryland saving nearly \$600 million in comprehensive costs associated with motorcycle crashes because of helmet use in 2017 alone. With 100 percent use, the state could have saved over \$65 million more. Essentially, Maryland is missing only about 10 percent of the total benefit from comprehensive motorcycle helmet use.
 - Conversely, in Pennsylvania, the state could have saved an additional \$400 million with 100 percent use. Lack of helmet use is costing Pennsylvania approximately 38 percent of the total benefit from comprehensive motorcycle helmet use.
 - Likewise, Delaware is also missing out on approximately 32 percent of the total benefit from comprehensive motorcycle helmet use or \$18 million that could have been saved.
 - Unlike neighboring states that are in effect leaving cost-savings “on the table,” Maryland is comparatively realizing more substantial financial benefits from greater motorcycle helmet use.
- A partial age helmet law is impossible for police to enforce. How will a police officer know if the motorcyclist riding by without a helmet at 60 mph is over 21 and meets the two criteria spelled out in the legislation? If passed, the law will result in more deaths and injuries and costs for the state.
- Age-specific helmet laws, such as SB 712, are ineffective, unenforceable and unpopular. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, in states with weak youth-specific helmet laws, use has decreased and youth mortality has increased. Serious traumatic brain injury among youth was 38 percent higher in states with age-specific laws compared to states with all-rider helmet laws.
- Experience and data have proven that states that repeal an all-rider motorcycle helmet law always experience an increase in rider deaths, serious and disabling brain injuries, and medical costs usually borne by taxpayers and the state.
- The American Automobile Association (AAA) Foundation Traffic Safety Culture Index that found more than four in five Americans (82%) support a law requiring all motorcycle riders to wear a helmet.

Thanks so much for your assistance in helping to oppose the helmet repeal effort. Please contact Tara Gill (tgill@saferoads.org) and Allison Kennedy (akennedy@saferoads.org) with Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety if you have questions or need more information.