



Statement of Omar Masood, Director of State Government Relations, Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety

**FAVORABLE: In Support of Senate Bill 179
Senate Finance Committee
Maryland General Assembly
February 25, 2026**

Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety (Advocates), an alliance of consumer, safety, medical, public health and law enforcement groups and insurance companies working together to pass highway and auto safety laws that prevent crashes, save lives, reduce injuries, and contain costs, supports enactment of Senate Bill (SB) 179. This legislation will require the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) to study the implications of speed limit changes on highways that connect to Interstate 495 (I-495).

In 2024, there were an overall estimated 579¹ traffic fatalities in Maryland, which is an 11 percent increase from 2015 to 2024.² Speeding is a major contributor to traffic fatalities as 30 percent of the fatalities in 2023 involved speeding. Additionally, speeding related fatalities increased 40 percent from 2014 to 2023.³ Maryland incurs approximately \$5.9 billion in economic harm annually due to motor vehicle crashes according to a 2019 analysis.⁴ This is equivalent to a “crash tax” of \$977 per resident each year.⁵ When updated for inflation alone, in 2026, costs would equate to approximately \$7.6 billion.⁶ Traffic safety is a serious and costly issue in urgent need of solutions.

SB 179 would require MDOT to conduct a study which includes identifying speed limits on highways connecting to I-495 and reviewing other traffic safety metrics, including the prevalence of crashes, hazards, incidents and speeding tickets over the past five years at locations where highways connect to I-495. In addition, the study would explore the feasibility of requiring the speed limit to deviate by only five miles per hour at such locations.

The data and analysis generated by the study would enable MDOT to make data-driven recommendations for safety improvements based on data that is current and specific to these roads, not assumptions. We urge you to advance SB 179.

¹ Traffic Safety Facts: Crash Stats, Early Estimate of Motor Vehicle Traffic Fatalities in 2024, NHTSA, April 2025, DOT HS 813 710, available at <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813710>.

² State Traffic Safety Information for Maryland, NHTSA, available at <https://cdan.dot.gov/stsi.htm>.

³ State Traffic Safety Information for Maryland, NHTSA, available at <https://cdan.dot.gov/STSI/stsi.htm>.

⁴ The Economic and Societal Impact of Motor Vehicle Crashes, 2019, NHTSA, Feb. 2023, DOT HS 813 403, available at <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813403>.

⁵ The Economic and Societal Impact of Motor Vehicle Crashes, 2019, NHTSA, Feb. 2023, DOT HS 813 403, available at <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813403>.

⁶ CPI Inflation Calculator, BLS, Jan. 2019 to Jan. 2026, available at <https://data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/cpicalc.pl>.