
March 5, 2020

The Honorable Kumar Barve
Chairman, Environment & Transportation Committee
251 House Office Building
Annapolis MD 21401

Re: *Letter of Information – House Bill 1305 – Motor Vehicles – Operations When Approaching Stopped, Standing, or Parked Vehicles*

Dear Chairman Barve and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) takes no position on House Bill 1305 but offers the following information for the Committee’s consideration.

House Bill 1305 would expand the state’s “move over” law, which requires that, if practicable, a driver move into an adjacent lane when approaching a stopped, standing, or parked vehicle; should that not be possible, the driver would then reduce their speed. The bill removes the current limitation that the requirement to move over or slow down applies when approaching a commercial vehicle rendering assistance, to an emergency vehicle, service vehicle, tow truck or waste/recycling collection vehicle using visual warning signals while stopped on the highway, and instead allows that any vehicle stopped on a highway using visual warning lamps (“hazards”) should be approached by moving over or reducing speed.

While it is not possible to use summary level crash data to identify fatalities and injuries that resulted specifically from a failure to move over or slow down for a vehicle stopped on the roadside, it is known that in addition to the highway workers and emergency responders currently protected by the “move over” provision, it is an every-day occurrence for the drivers of vehicles disabled on the roadway to exit their vehicles, positioning themselves as highly-vulnerable pedestrians. Anecdotally, several of the 131 total pedestrian fatalities that occurred in Maryland in 2018 were related to situations such as these.

The MDOT supports the move over law as one of many measures to tackle the tragedy of fatalities and serious injuries on our highways. There is anecdotal evidence that drivers still do not comply with the current requirements, and the hope is that simplifying the law will lead to more awareness and compliance. MDOT continues to aggressively pursue highway safety education and strategic planning efforts such as developing safety campaigns and supporting law enforcement efforts to increase motorist’s knowledge of the law and how to drive safely when approaching stopped vehicles along the roadway.

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The Maryland Department of Transportation respectfully requests the Committee consider this information when deliberating House Bill 1305.

Respectfully Submitted,

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