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In support of SB512/HB721

Members of the Committee:

Traffic deaths of pedestrians and bicyclists are at the highest level in 3 decades.

Unlike car drivers and passengers, pedestrians and bicyclists are not protected by a steel cage and airbags. In fact, in the United States, almost all advances in safer vehicle design in recent decades have been solely for the benefit of vehicle occupants, not for those outside who the vehicle might strike.

Given the disparity in the outcome, it is incumbent upon drivers of motor vehicles to avoid hitting vulnerable road users like pedestrians and bicyclists. Therefore, when drivers have not operated their vehicles in a safe manner and caused a crash, it is important that prosecutors have a range of tools to use depending on the particular details of the crash. This bill will give prosecutors an additional tool.

Enforcement of the laws against unsafe driving is just one aspect of a safe transportation system. Maryland must also provide more resources to build sidewalks and improve intersections on the state roads where pedestrian and bicycle fatalities are so common. However, even with improved infrastructure, it will continue to be necessary to deal with drivers who choose to violate the traffic laws intended to keep vulnerable road users safe.

Please pass this bill.

Thank you for your attention.