



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony in Support of HB494
Vehicle Laws - Reckless Driving - Excessive Speeding
Testimony by Delegate Vaughn Stewart
February 4, 2021 • Environment and Transportation Committee

Too often, Maryland motorists treat posted speed limits as decorative suggestions rather than enforceable law. As a result, while vehicle miles traveled continue to fall, crash-related injuries and deaths continue apace. Indeed, Maryland has the dubious distinction of being third in the country in the number of traffic crashes per capita;¹ Each year, nearly 600 Marylanders die and nearly 50,000 are injured in crashes. This preexisting problem has only been exacerbated by the pandemic: The emptier roadways have incited a flood of reckless motorists eager to test the limits of their vehicles. While enhanced enforcement is the most important way to deter this reckless behavior, we can modify penalties to support law enforcement's efforts.

Over the interim, Senator Ben Kramer and I collaborated with law enforcement officials about the legislative solutions the General Assembly could pursue to help them deter dangerous and reckless driving. Again and again, they cited Virginia as an example of a state that has successfully cracked down on dangerous motorists. So HB494 takes a page out of Virginia's transportation code: It would establish that a motorist who exceeds the posted speed limit by 20 miles per hour or more would automatically be guilty of reckless driving. And it would require motorists to appear in court to pay their fine.

Currently, reckless driving in Maryland features the most vague and confusing standard in our transportation code. It is defined as driving "in wanton or willful disregard for the safety of persons or property; or in a manner that indicates a wanton or willful disregard for the safety of persons or property." This subjective standard provides little for law enforcement officers to go on. HB494 would provide law enforcement with another tool in their toolbox to keep Marylanders safe.

I urge a favorable report.

¹ Insurify, *Eyes on the Road: States with the Most Car Accidents* (2020),
<https://insurify.com/insights/states-with-most-car-accidents-2020/>