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*The Maryland House of Delegates*  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Testimony in Support of House Bill 118**

**Vehicle Laws - Injury or Death of Vulnerable Individual – Penalties**

Chairman Barve and members of the Environment and Transportation Committee:

This bill is nearly identical to House Bill 721 from last year, which the Environment and Transportation Committee and the House passed unanimously.

It fills a critical gap in existing law by providing appropriate penalties when drivers hurt or kill a vulnerable road user. A driver who hurts or kills someone should *not* be able to walk away with only a \$200 traffic citation. And even though the responding police officer may feel the same way, they don't have any other penalty options under current law.

What this bill does is define “vulnerable individuals.” Vulnerable road users are all of us — walkers, cyclists, wheelchair users, children on training wheels, a parent pushing a stroller, or someone with a disability. The bill then says that if a driver kills or seriously injures such an individual, they will be subject to a fine of up to \$2,000, will have their license suspended for at least 7 days and not more than 6 months, and may be subject to other penalties.

This bill was recommended by the Maryland Bicycle Safety Task Force and is based on a model law provided by the League of American Bicyclists. It is part of a national movement to fill a critical policy gap in many state laws to promote safer driving and save lives.

I'm joined by a witness who is an expert on the issue as well as someone who was hit by a car while biking and seriously injured. The driver only received a \$110 fine, even though admitted to simply trying to beat the bicyclist through the intersection.

The one small change from last year is this: Last year's bill said in section (B):

“An individual may not cause the serious physical injury or death of a vulnerable individual as a result of the individual operating a motor vehicle:

- (1) In a careless or distracted manner; or
- (2) In violation of any provision of this title.”

That section takes out “in a careless or distracted manner,” since that standard is included in the phrase “in violation of any provision of this title.”

Please give HB 118 a favorable report so that we can strengthen our message about the importance of safety on the roads and, hopefully, better protect vulnerable individuals.