

SB0293 – SUPPORT
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Vehicle Laws – Injury or Death of Vulnerable Individual – Penalties
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
January 27th ,2021

Dear Chair Smith and Distinguished Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee:

My name is Nigel Samaroo and on behalf of myself and Bike Maryland, I would like to thank you for allowing me to address you today regarding what I feel to be, very important and needed legislation for those of us who live in Maryland.

I am a cyclist who typically rides anywhere from 3-4,000 miles a year. On a clear, warm, sunny summer day on July 20th, 2017 in Columbia, MD, I decided to do a quick 20-mile bike ride before starting my workday. On my way back, I was t-boned by someone driving a minivan, resulting in my suffering a broken neck and paralysis on my right side. I was transported to Shock Trauma where I underwent surgery to fix my broken neck. During that time, I learned from the Police report that the person driving that day, saw me approaching in the opposite direction, and admitted to the police that he thought he could beat me in time to make his left turn onto US29 Northbound.

I have since through intensive PT and OT, regained the ability to walk and use my right arm and hand. Nevertheless, as I stand (sit) before you today, I am in constant 24 hours a day, 7 days a week pain in both my right and left side. I have since learned that spinal cord injuries take a very long time to heal and I am left because of this, with damage to my spinal cord that will require monitoring for the rest of my life.

The driver responsible for this received a ticket for failure to yield and a \$110.00 fine and continues to drive on the roads. Recently according to court records, his license has been suspended for failure to pay the fine. Also, according to court records, he has a prior conviction for speeding, 60 mph in a 45mph zone, and his license was also suspended at that time for failure to pay the associated fine.

Once he paid the fine, his license was reinstated. Currently, there is no legislation that would warrant a second look at those individuals who hurt someone through their gross negligence.

This bill will raise the duty of care for drivers when they encounter pedestrians, bicyclists, motorcyclists, wheelchair users and other vulnerable road users lawfully using or crossing our roads. The key benefits of this law include:

- Deterrence for bad driver behaviors around vulnerable users

- Fills gaps between ordinary traffic violations and more severe offenses and provides additional charging and penalty options for law enforcement, prosecutors, and judges
- Allows for stronger penalties for drivers causing serious injury or death
- Promotes public awareness of the threat posed by motorists near vulnerable individuals outside of vehicles

We need a Vulnerable Road User Law in Maryland.

Thank you for your time.

Respectfully submitted,
Nigel Samaroo, MPH