

February 24, 2021

The Honorable Luke Clippinger
House Judiciary Committee
Room 101 House Office Building
Annapolis MD 21401

Re: Letter of Support – House Bill 749 – Drunk Driving Offenses – Ignition Interlock System Program

Dear Chairman Smith and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Transportation supports House Bill 749 as an opportunity to appropriately expand the use of an effective tool in combatting the dangers of drunk driving.

House Bill 749 serves to strengthen and increase participation in the Ignition Interlock Program (IIP) for drunk or drugged driving offenses. Namely, a driver who commits a violation of MD TA §21-902(b) – driving while impaired – and is either convicted, suspended, or revoked on points, or is granted probation before judgement, must enter IIP.

Maryland has a goal of reaching zero fatalities on our roadways by 2030 and in 2019 nearly 27% of the fatal crashes in Maryland involved drugs and or alcohol. The MDOT Motor Vehicle Administration (MDOT MVA) supports the use of the Ignition Interlock Program (IIP) as an effective measure to reduce drunk driving crashes, injuries, and deaths. According to a 2012 National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) study, drivers who have interlocks installed are 35 to 75 percent less likely to have a repeat drunk driving offense than convicted drunk drivers who do not have a device installed.

In Maryland, the landmark 2016 passage of Noah’s Law strengthened administrative sanctions and significantly expanded the IIP. Participation in the IIP has increased, and these changes are helping to keep more drunk drivers from getting behind the wheel and endangering the lives of others traveling on Maryland’s roadways. In FY 2020, Maryland’s IIP prevented more than 3,800 attempts by a driver participating in the program from trying to start or drive a vehicle with a blood alcohol concentration greater than the legal limit of 0.08.

Strengthening Maryland’s IIP program, which is already viewed as a national model by adding the requirement for probation before judgement, is an assertive safety measure that builds on positive steps taken in recent years to combat the epidemic of drunk driving.

For these reasons, the Maryland Department of Transportation respectfully requests the Committee grant House Bill 749 a favorable report.

Respectfully submitted,

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