
March 3, 2022

The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr.
Chairman, Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Letter of Support – Senate Bill 653 – Drunk Driving Offenses – Ignition Interlock System Program

Dear Chairman Smith and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) supports Senate Bill 653 as an opportunity to expand the use of an effective tool in combatting the dangers of drunk driving.

Senate Bill 653 serves to strengthen and increase participation in the Ignition Interlock Program (IIP) by requiring that an individual found to be driving while under the influence or impaired and is either convicted, suspended, or revoked on points, or is granted probation before judgement, must enter the Ignition Interlock Program (IIP).

Over the last 10 years, 30 percent of Maryland’s fatal crashes have involved alcohol or drugs and Maryland strives to reduce that number by setting the goal of reaching zero fatalities on our roadways by 2030. The MDOT Motor Vehicle Administration (MDOT MVA) supports the use of the IIP as an effective tool to reduce drunk driving crashes. Research continues to show that drivers who have interlocks installed are significantly less likely to have a repeat drunk driving offense than those drivers who do not have a device installed. A 2016 study by the California Department of Motor Vehicles noted a success rate between 45 and 74 percent effectiveness in reducing recidivism of driving under the influence among first-time offenders – the lower rate due to those who complete an Ignition Interlock Device (IID) within 182 days and the higher rate due to those who continue to use an IID for the full 365 days. A 2017 study in the American Journal of Preventative Medicine noted a national decrease of seven to eight percent in fatal crashes caused by a drunk driver as a result of IID laws for first time offenders. This further demonstrates the effectiveness at keeping impaired drivers off the roadways and that comprehensive ignition interlock laws help states reduce impaired driving fatalities.

In 2016, the landmark passage of Maryland’s Noah’s Law strengthened administrative sanctions for impaired driving and significantly expanded the IIP. Participation in the IIP has increased as a result, and these changes are helping to keep Maryland’s roadway users safe. In FY 2020, Maryland’s IIP prevented more than 3,700 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.

The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr.
Page Two

Strengthening Maryland's IIP program by requiring participation for drunk drivers receiving a probation before judgement disposition is an important next step in strengthening Maryland's network of impaired driving prevention programs and preventing repeat offenses. Although Maryland has implemented many measures to help end impaired driving, the national advocacy group, Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), recently released their 2021 scorecard in which Maryland received a C+. In that report, MADD noted that Maryland's all-offender law contains a "loophole," which they describe as the biggest in the country. Specifically, first-time convicted drunk drivers are able to avoid a mandatory ignition interlock referral when that verdict is set aside, and the drunk driver is granted a Probation Before Judgement (PBJ) disposition. Senate Bill 653 addresses this gap by requiring all those receiving a PBJ for 21-902 (a) or (b) offenses to enroll in the IIP.

For these reasons, the Maryland Department of Transportation respectfully requests the Committee grant Senate Bill 653 a favorable report.

Respectfully submitted,

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