



January 30, 2024

Maryland Senate
Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: SEMA Opposition to SB 155/HB 212

Chairman of the Board

* Kyle Fickler

Chair-Elect

* Melanie White

**Immediate Past Chairman
& Secretary**

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General Counsel

David P. Goch

* Executive Committee

Dear Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee:

On behalf of the Specialty Equipment Market Association (SEMA), I would like to thank lawmakers in Maryland for their thoughtful attempts in recent years to deal with motor vehicle exhaust noise. However, I write in respectful opposition to Senate Bill (SB) 155/ House Bill (HB) 212, which would allow three counties to enforce certain motor vehicle noise requirements with the use of sound-activated enforcement devices to issue citations. Rather than investing in unproven technology, Maryland needs to implement a fair testing procedure and decibel limit for vehicle owners accused of exhaust noise violations. Other states have adopted a decibel limit of 95 decibels when tested using an SAE International procedure, which provides a fair and reasonable working system. This SEMA-supported SAE test is conducted in a controlled environment using objective methodology. This solution offers Maryland a clear standard with a proven record of success.

Noise Cameras Aren't Ready for Primetime

The technology implemented by sound-activated enforcement devices is in its nascent stages and requires manual review before a ticket is issued. These devices contain a sound meter that triggers a camera to be activated if an upper sound limit is reached. However, neither the sound meter nor the camera can differentiate what caused the offending noise. It is up to the reviewer to make that determination, which may require that individual to select from a group of vehicles in an intersection and then issue a citation. Given the bill's stated intent for use in heavily populated counties, which will have a higher number of vehicles and buildings (that amplify sound), the feasibility of using these devices to pinpoint and ticket the offending vehicle accurately is questionable.

Cities that have deployed noise cameras, such as New York, Knoxville, Edmonton, and Toronto, have reported issues identifying offending vehicles and either failed to issue tickets or scrapped their programs

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entirely. In Edmonton, the city spent \$192,000 in equipment over a three-month period and only produced one enforcement.

In 2022, California Governor Gavin Newsom signed into law a bill (SB 1079) that requires the state to study the effectiveness of noise-detecting cameras to enforce motor-vehicle exhaust noise laws prior to deploying them. An early version of the bill would have allowed six cities to begin issuing tickets using cameras, but the bill was amended after it was determined that the technology was too early in development to be a reliable enforcement mechanism.

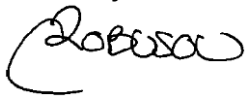
Until the technology is proven reliable, Maryland should only consider a penalty-free pilot to compile the data necessary to move forward.

One Standard to Rule Them All

For decades, SEMA has successfully worked to ensure that states enact reasonable muffler noise laws that are not burdensome to the industry while not creating a nuisance for local communities. Successfully enacted in states such as California, Maine and Montana, SEMA's model bill sets one exhaust noise limit (95 decibels) and uses an objective test procedure (SAE J1492) to determine compliance. This testing procedure provides a fair and reasonable working system. This SAE test is conducted in a controlled environment using an objective methodology.

The Specialty Equipment Market Association (SEMA) is a trade association that consists of a diverse group of manufacturers, distributors, retailers, publishing companies, auto restorers, street-rod builders, restylers, car clubs, race teams and more. SEMA members make, buy, sell and use all kinds of specialty parts and accessories to make vehicles more attractive, more unique, more convenient, faster, safer, more fun and even like-new again. SEMA represents more than 7,000 small businesses nationwide and 72 local businesses in Maryland. The specialty equipment industry contributes \$3.24 billion to Maryland's economy, including 14,946 jobs, \$1.19 billion in total wages and benefits, and \$530.24 million in taxes, annually.

Sincerely,



Christian Robison
Senior Director, State Government Affairs & Grassroots
Specialty Equipment Market Association