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Committee: Judicial Proceedings

Testimony on: SB495 - “Reckless and Negligent Driving – Death of Another – Must-Appear Violation (Sherry’s and Ryan’s Law)”

Position: Support

Hearing Date: February 16, 2021

The Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club supports SB495, which would provide that a person charged with reckless or negligent driving that contributes to an accident resulting in the death of another person must appear in court, not be able to prepay the fine, and be subject to a fine not exceeding \$1,000.

Transportation is now the primary contributor to greenhouse gas emissions in our state. Tailpipe emissions from cars and trucks are also a major source of health-damaging air pollution. This means there is growing need to get individuals out of their cars, taking transit, riding bikes and walking more. However, it is quite difficult to make this happen near roads where people sometimes drive in a reckless or negligent manner.

We live in a car-centric culture where transportation planning, road infrastructure and vehicle laws are largely focused on enabling vehicles to get to their destination as swiftly as possible. Unfortunately, this has resulted in some drivers feeling they have priority on the road, and there are high rates of injury and death for bicyclists and pedestrians as well as vehicle drivers and passengers.

This bill could help bring about needed change. The tougher approach specified in the bill would force individuals to take responsibility in court for their reckless or negligent driving, where they also may have to face people who lost a loved one in an accident caused by their driving. This should help discourage reckless and negligent driving, and make our roads safer for everyone.

We urge the Committee to issue a favorable report on this bill.

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Founded in 1892, the Sierra Club is America’s oldest and largest grassroots environmental organization. The Maryland Chapter has over 75,000 members and supporters, and the Sierra Club nationwide has over 800,000 members and nearly four million supporters.