

Dear Criminal Justice Committee Members:

The Washtenaw Bicycling and Walking Coalition is pleased to voice our support for HB 4792 and HB 4799, legislation aimed at protecting non-motorized roadway users and educating motorists about safely sharing Michigan roads.

The Washtenaw Bicycling and Walking Coalition is a nonprofit organization based in Ann Arbor, Michigan serving Washtenaw County. Our mission is to make Washtenaw County a national leader in bicycling and walking by improving facilities, policies, and community support through advocacy and education. In order to accomplish this mission, we need strong laws in the State of Michigan that recognize that we have a crisis occurring here in Michigan with regards to the safety of pedestrians and cyclists on our streets.

Perhaps "crisis" feels too dramatic, but here are the facts:

- In the 16 year period of the Vietnam War, 2,654 Michigan residents were killed fighting in the Vietnam War.
- Over the past 16 years in Michigan (1996-2012) 3,022 Michigan residents were killed in Michigan by a motor vehicle simple because they simply choose to go out for a bike ride or for a walk.

All of these deaths are tragedies and point to crises that require our attention. A disproportionately high number of Michigan bicyclists and pedestrians are involved in crashes that result in deaths or serious injuries. These deaths are occurring for a multitude of reasons, poor urban planning, lack of adequate transportation options, etc. It has taken decades to create this crisis and it will take decades to undo. However, one of the most important steps we can take to solve this problem is to raise visibility about this issue and to raise protections for these vulnerable users of our roadway.

In Michigan, similar enhanced penalties already exist for reckless drivers who injure or kill construction workers, children in designated school zones, or operators of slow-moving farm vehicles. Vulnerable roadway user provisions are increasing in popularity across the

country with multiple states enacting laws in recent years, and legislation pending in many others.

Michigan is making great strides in improving the safety of our roadways for all users. Our state leads the nation with nearly 90 locally adopted Complete Streets ordinances and resolutions. Coupled with these infrastructure improvements, and ongoing efforts to improve driver's education in our state, this legislation provides law enforcement and prosecutors with an enhanced set of tools that fill the gap between basic traffic infractions and more serious crimes.

In addition to infrastructure improvements, improved educational efforts are underway to increase awareness among Michigan drivers and bicyclists. To be viable, however, "Share the Road" campaigns must have a legal backbone, the foundation of which are enhanced protections for non-motorized users.

We are very encouraged to see broad bipartisan support for these common sense bills, as demonstrated by the 20 individual Representatives from both sides of the aisle who signed on as cosponsors of HB 4792 and HB 4799. This includes numerous members of the Criminal Justice Committee.

We are also pleased to note that the draft Michigan Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Action Plan 2013-2016 recommends the adoption of vulnerable roadway user legislation as a means to improve safety for bicyclists and pedestrians.

On behalf of the Washtenaw Bicycling and Walking Coalition we strongly urge you to vote in favor of HB 4792 and HB 4799.

Sincerely,

Erica Briggs

WBWC 2013 Board Chair