



News Release

CONTACTS: Ragina Cooper Averella
AAA Mid-Atlantic
Cell: 443.465.5020

Kurt Gregory Erickson
WRAP
Cell: 703.625.2303

AAA MID-ATLANTIC AND WASHINGTON REGIONAL ALCOHOL PROGRAM (WRAP) CALL UPON MARYLAND LEGISLATORS TO STRENGTHEN DRUNK DRIVING LAWS

Advocacy Groups Unite To Testify In Support Of Mandatory Vehicle Ignition Interlock Systems and Stronger Sanctions Against Drunk Drivers

TOWSON, MD (March 4, 2015) – Representatives from AAA Mid-Atlantic and the nonprofit Washington Regional Alcohol Program (WRAP) will be in Annapolis this afternoon calling upon the House Judiciary Committee to issue a favorable report for two drunk driving bills that would be another step forward in curtailing Maryland’s alcohol-related fatalities.

[House Bill 872 – Drunk Driving Reduction Act of 2015](#) introduced by Delegate Benjamin F. Kramer (*D-District 19, Montgomery County*) and co-sponsored by 25 other delegates, mandates the use of ignition interlock systems for **all** convicted DUI offenders, including first time offenders.

This bill would require the Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA) to suspend indefinitely the license of any convicted drunk driver that fails to participate in the ignition interlock system or fails to complete the program.

Offenders convicted for the first time would be required to participate in the program for at least six months. Those convicted a second and third time would be required to participate in the program for one and three years, respectively.

“The increased use of ‘ignition interlocks for first-time offenders should be encouraged and supported’ was a specific recommendation made by Maryland’s Task Force to Combat Driving Under the

Influence of Drugs and Alcohol over half-a-decade ago,” said Kurt Erickson, WRAP President, and a member of the Task Force. “This legislation looks to make that 2008 recommendation a 2015 reality.”

“In the war against drunk driving, we need every available weapon. The mandatory use of ignition interlocks for all drivers convicted of DUI has proven to be an essential weapon in the drunk driving fight,” noted Ragina Cooper Averella, Public and Government Affairs Manager for AAA Mid-Atlantic. “Drunk driving fatalities are completely preventable and the use of ignition interlocks helps ensure that a drunk driver will not be able to endanger the lives of others.”

HB 872 and the Senate version (SB 395) of the bill, which was heard last week, have received wide spread support from many traffic safety advocates, including MADD, and prosecutors, because of its inclusion of all drivers, including the first time offender. “The reality is that first-time offenders aren’t really first-time offenders at all. It is simply the first time these drivers have been caught for something they have most likely done countless times,” commented Averella.

According to a study authorized by Maryland’s Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA), first time abusers are likely to have driven under the influence 100 times or more before being caught.

While traffic fatalities have been declining over the last 10 years, the number of traffic fatalities due to alcohol impairment persists at approximately 30 percent, according to the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration (NHTSA). In 2013, nationally, there were 32,719 traffic fatalities, nearly 31 percent, or 10,076 of those fatalities involved a driver with a BAC of 0.08 or higher. In Maryland, of 465 traffic fatalities 141 – or 30.3 percent involved an impaired driver.

While AAA Mid-Atlantic and WRAP believe interlocks are not a panacea, they are another tool that, when used as part of a solution for drivers with persistent alcohol problems, can help keep them from driving after they have been drinking and save lives on Maryland roads.

“Mandated ignition interlocks for all convicted DUI offenders are an overdue means of addressing a killer which claims a life on Maryland’s roadways, on average, every 62-hours,” said Erickson.

“As a tool, interlocks are still enormously under-utilized,” commented Averella. “This bill will ensure that their use is more widespread, as AAA Mid-Atlantic believes it should be.”

According to the *Maryland Task Force to Combat Driving Under the Influence of Drugs and Alcohol*, of which WRAP was a member, the use of ignition interlock systems has been shown to lead to long-lasting changes in driver behavior and the reduction of recidivism. The Task Force concluded that states which have extended required times for ignition interlock use for certain drunk driving offenses have experienced a 60 – 95 percent decrease in recidivism.

The Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA) would set up the ignition interlock program and establish minimum standards for all service providers, according to details of the bill.

The advocates will also be testifying in support of [House Bill 430 – Drunk Driving – Accidents Resulting in Death – Sanctions for Administrative Per Se Offenses](#), co-sponsored by Delegates William Folden (*R-District 3, Frederick County*) and Kathy Afzali (*R-District 4, Frederick and Carroll Counties*). This legislation will increase administrative sanctions and penalties for those who are convicted of drunk driving crashes where someone is killed. AAA and WRAP strongly support stricter sanctions for those who cause fatal crashes as a result of impairment.



Follow [@AAAMDNews](#) #AAAMDNews, [@WRAP_org](#)



Like us on Facebook: [AAAMidAtlanticNews](#), [WRAP.org](#)

AAA Mid-Atlantic advocates on behalf of its nearly four million members in Maryland, Virginia, Delaware, Pennsylvania, New Jersey and the District of Columbia. It provides a wide range of personal insurance, travel, financial and automotive services through its 60 AAA stores, regional operations centers, and the Internet. For more information, please visit our web site at www.AAA.com.

Founded in 1982, the Maryland nonprofit Washington Regional Alcohol Program is an award-winning public-private partnership working to prevent drunk driving and underage drinking in the Washington-metropolitan area. Through public education, innovative health education programs and advocacy, WRAP is credited with keeping the metro-Washington area's alcohol-related traffic deaths consistently lower than the national average. WRAP, however, may best be known to area residents via the organization's popular free cab ride service for would-be drunk drivers, SoberRide®.

###