



April 19, 2018

The Honorable Rick Jones
Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman
201 Townsend Street, Suite 4200
Lansing, MI 48933

The Honorable Steven M. Bieda
Senate Judiciary Committee Minority Vice-Chair
201 Townsend Street, Suite 6300
Lansing, MI 48933

Dear Chairman Jones and Vice-Chair Bieda:

We write to ask you to hold a hearing in consideration of HB 4265, a bill before the Senate Judiciary Committee which would require drivers to provide at least three feet of space when passing bicyclists to promote safer road sharing practices. Although Michigan already has a general “safe passing law” to protect cyclists, implementing a set safe passing distance of three feet would provide cyclists much greater protections and reinforce bicyclists as equal roadway users.

In 2016, Michigan averaged 3.9 bicycle deaths per one million residents, with a total of 1,988 crashes and 42 fatal crashes.¹ These facts and current Michigan bike policies lead the League of American Bicyclists to rank Michigan the 13th best state to bike in. This is a good ranking, and we know Michigan can do even better. Neighboring Minnesota, which passed a safe passing distance law of three feet in 2004, was ranked 2nd.² Minnesota’s death rate per million residents was 1.8 in 2015, half of Michigan’s.³⁴

Furthermore, bicyclists are particularly vulnerable when travelling “straight ahead” alongside traffic. In 2016, 48% of fatal bike accidents occurred when both the cyclist and the car were going the same direction and the car attempted to overtake the cyclist.⁵ A three-foot safe passing law can decrease fatal bike incidents. In addition, mandating a set distance will instill safe driving practices in new and seasoned drivers alike, and create a sense of security.

America is embracing bike riding like never before, whether as a way of exercising or commuting to work or school. States and cities must accommodate this growing trend to keep our roads safe for everyone. Part of our mission at Safe Kids is to encourage families and children to spend time outside riding bikes and exercising as much as possible. But for that to happen, roads must be safer for all who share them. Parents must feel confident that their children can bike to school and around their neighborhoods in safety. Michigan is known worldwide for engineering automobile safety, and this legislation would help Michigan become known as a state which is safe and welcoming to bicyclists.

Sincerely,

Safe Kids Kalamazoo County
Safe Kids Capital Area
Safe Kids Worldwide



¹ Michigan Traffic Crash Facts. (2016). *2016 Michigan Traffic Crash Facts - Statewide*. Michigan Department of State Police, Michigan Office of Highway Safety Planning. Available at <https://www.michigantrafficcrashfacts.org/pub/2016/state-wide>

² League of American Bicyclists. *2017 Bicycle Friendly State Ranking*. Available at <https://bikeleague.org/content/ranking>

³ Wisconsin Department of Transportation. (2017). *Final Year End Crash Statistics*. Available at <http://wisconsindot.gov/Pages/about-wisdot/newsroom/statistics/final.aspx>

⁴ Traffic Crash Reporting System. (2017) *2016 Year-End*. Michigan State Police Criminal Justice Information Center. Available at http://www.michigan.gov/documents/msp/2016_YE_Report_568742_7.pdf

⁵ Gursten, S. (2016). *Statistics: How many bicycle accidents are there in Michigan?*. Michigan Auto Law. Available at <https://www.michiganautolaw.com/blog/2016/10/26/bicycle-accident-statistics/>