



February 6, 2024

Oppose HB 834 weakening Virginia's DUI law

The Honorable Patrick Hope
Chair, House Appropriations Committee

Dear Chair Hope and House Appropriations Committee Members,

Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) urges you to oppose HB 834, a bill that would undermine Virginia's drunk and drug-impaired driving law. Specifically, the legislation would allow convicted impaired drivers who cause a fatal crash to receive a "second look" after serving 15 years in a state correctional facility, and possibly granted early release. Reducing the sentences for impaired drivers who cause a fatal crash revictimizes victim survivors and undermines the severity of the preventable violent crime of drunk and drug-impaired driving.

The crime of drunk and impaired driving has increased by double digits over the last three years of available data. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) in 2021, 281 Virginians were killed in drunk driving crashes—a 19% increase from 2019.

Most drunk and drug-impaired drivers who cause a fatal crash in Virginia would not be affected by this legislation because typically these offenders do not receive a sentence of more than 15 years. However, for the most abominable instances in which an impaired driver is sentenced to more than 15 years, HB 834 will reverse justice by granting an opportunity for early release. Granting early release to an offender who caused a fatal crash revictimizes victims and sends a very mixed message to Virginia residents of the potential consequences for drunk and drug-impaired driving.

Every time someone makes the choice to get behind the wheel of a vehicle impaired, the danger and potential result is the same – loss of life. Drunk and drug-impaired driving is a completely preventable violent crime that requires stiff consequences to ensure impaired driving laws have teeth and ensure justice for victims and survivors.

MADD urges you to oppose HB 834. If you have any questions or need more information, please contact me at bryna.clarkbraverman@madd.org or 410-964-5757 Ext 2453. Thank you in advance for your prompt consideration of this important request.

Sincerely,

Bryna Clark-Braverman
MADD Mid-Atlantic Regional Executive Director