

# Frequent license renewals proposed for older drivers

## Eight-year cycle now in place

Becca Heller – February 23, 2013

ANNAPOLIS — While a December Motor Vehicle Administration report found older drivers have fewer crashes, a group of experts and witnesses told a House committee last week that older drivers should be required to renew their licenses on a more frequent basis and in person.

“Last year Maryland changed the (license) renewal period to eight years, and they did it just for financial reasons,” said Susan Cohen, now the founder of Americans for Older Driver Safety. “And you only have to renew in person every other time, so 16 years can go by without someone having to go into the MVA. That may be fine for somebody who’s 35, but if you’re 70 ...”

Two years ago, Cohen’s 20-year-old son, Johns Hopkins student Nathan Krasnopoler, was killed in Baltimore by an 83-year-old driver, not seeing him on his bike. The driver ran Krasnopoler over, parked the car on his body, then sat down, failing to call for help.

Krasnopoler’s death has since been the center of debates surrounding policy dealing with older drivers, and Cohen has taken up the front lines in the effort to increase older driver safety through legislation.

In order for an older driver to come under license review, it requires a referral, which can come from law enforcement, a health provider or a person’s self-admission. Self-referral, however, is rare, because losing one’s license can essentially immobilize a person.

“Quitting driving can sometimes mean: ‘I’m no longer involved in my community, I can no longer do what I want to do,’” said Vanya Jones, assistant professor at John’s Hopkins University, at a briefing for the House Environmental Matters Committee.

Jones said that the lack of alternative transportation programs greatly discourages older drivers from referring themselves for review.

“If we’re going to look at making restrictions greater — which I think we should — then we need to further develop programs and engage those communities in ways that help make that transition.”

Representatives from AAA gave some insight on current Maryland policies to ensure older driver safety.

“We have this great system in Maryland to refer drivers for review, but we’re not taking advantage of it,” said Jake Nelson, director of traffic safety advocacy and research at AAA.

Nelson said there are just a couple of small things that could be changed to drastically improve the program.

“It’s simple things like getting law enforcement to be more efficient and more frequently refer older drivers to (the Medical Advisory Board). It’s getting health care providers to more commonly refer drivers. It’s increasing the ease with which both of those groups are able to do it. And it’s a matter of getting them into the DMV to renew their licenses more frequently.”

Source: <http://times-news.com/local/x273851315/Frequent-license-renewals-proposed-for-older-drivers>