

Parents Of Student Killed By Elderly Driver Fight For Safer Roads

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<http://baltimore.cbslocal.com/2013/02/19/parents-of-student-killed-by-elderly-driver-fight-for-safer-roads/>

BALTIMORE (WJZ) — Safety on Maryland roads: that's the personal mission for the parents of a former Hopkins student killed by an elderly driver.

Christie Iieto explains why their proposal could save lives.

When an elderly driver killed Hopkins student Nathan Krasnopoler two years ago, it became his family's personal mission to target people they believe should no longer get behind the wheel.

"He would be very happy to know that I was going to try to make sure that drivers are reviewed," said Susan Cohen.

Tuesday, Cohen told lawmakers she would like to see drivers over 70 get their licenses reviewed every two years.

"Many drivers don't realize their abilities have changed," Cohen said.

In 2012, lawmakers extended renewals from every five to eight years

"I had a grandmother, she drove her car until she was 82," said driver Samuel Jones.

An MVA report just released says licensed drivers over 75 have the lowest crash rate of any driver but they also drive less.

"They are often at fault but they're a hazard to themselves more so than other people on the road," said Jake Nelson, AAA.

But that doesn't change the fact officials say in the next 15 years, the number of elderly drivers in Maryland will triple.

Maryland already has more than 600,000 licensed drivers over 65. That's why experts say we need to deal with this now.

"When you're elderly, you are driving a very big vehicle and you're responsible for that and if you don't have the reflexes, it can cause danger," said Mark Schaefer.

Currently, 27 states and D.C. require additional testing for seniors. Maryland requires drivers over 40 to take an eye exam.

"We're not trying to take people off the road," said Cohen.

Cohen says this extra step will keep more families safe. She hopes a bill will be ready to go before

lawmakers next session.

Next Wednesday will mark the two-year anniversary of Nathan Krasnopoler's fatal accident.

Lawmakers Reviewing Md.'s Licensing Laws

Fox 45

February 19, 2013

<http://foxbaltimore.com/news/features/top-stories/stories/lawmakers-reviewing-mds-licensing-laws-senior-citizens-17996.shtml#.UST7NYletjs>

Two years after a Johns Hopkins University student was struck and killed by an elderly driver, the victim's mother appeared before a legislative committee in Annapolis.

Susan Cohen is asking state lawmakers to review the state's licensing laws for senior citizens.

Cohen's 20-year-old son, Nathan Krasnopoler, was riding his bicycle near the Hopkins Homewood campus in February, 2011 when he was struck by a car driven by an 83-year-old woman.

Krasnaopoler was pinned under the woman's car, but the elderly driver got out and did nothing to render assistance.

Susan Cohen is upset with a new law that requires Maryland drivers who renew their licenses to do so every eight years instead of every five years.

The chance was designed to save the state money.

But the new law only requires drivers to show up in person to renew their licenses once every 16 years.

Cohen says "That means an age 70 driver would renew and then not actually have to set foot in the MVA until they're 86 and that's just not really a good situation."

"You know they don't know that they're reaction time or their ability to process a number of different factors to make a quick decision has changed," said Cohen.

Jake Nelson, Director of Traffic Safety Advocacy and Research at AAA says "If you look at the crash data, what we learn is older drivers are actually among the safest on the road. When they do crash, they're most likely to kill themselves, not other road users."

Nelson supports laws that would require elderly drivers to renew their licenses more often than every eight years.

"The more frequently that can occur, the more likely we are to detect challenges that the individual may be facing.

The Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration is currently conducting a detailed study of elderly drivers.

A final report is expected to be released later this year, and legislators are expected to use the findings to consider updating laws that would impact elderly drivers.

Susan Cohen says she is not trying to discourage senior citizens from driving. "We want to keep drivers on the road, we just want them to be safer," said Cohen. **Frequent License Renewals Proposed for Older Drivers**

Maryland Reporter.com

February 19, 2013

<http://marylandreporter.com/2013/02/19/frequent-license-renewals-proposed-for-older-drivers/>

While a December Motor Vehicle Administration report found older drivers have fewer crashes, a group of experts and witnesses told a House committee Tuesday 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 frontlines in the effort to increase older driver safety through legislation.

More alternatives for drivers who quit

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 explained 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."

Enabling the system

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 explained that 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.”

Dangers of Older Drivers

The Baltimore Sun

February 19, 2013

http://articles.baltimoresun.com/2013-02-19/news/bs-ed-older-drivers-20130219_1_older-drivers-senior-drivers-younger-drivers

Our view: Maryland's aging driving population poses a serious safety risk that lawmakers in Annapolis appear reluctant to recognize

If there is some good to arise from the tragic death of Nathan Krasnopoler — the 20-year-old Johns Hopkins University student killed while riding his bicycle on University Parkway by an 83-year-old driver who didn't notice him in the bike lane — it may be to call greater attention to the dangers of Maryland's aging driver population.

Today, Mr. Krasnopoler's parents were in Annapolis to brief the House Environmental Matters Committee on the latest data provided by the Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration documenting the threat. The number of Maryland drivers over age 70 is expected to double in just seven years and triple in 15 as baby boomers reach their geriatric years.

Turning 70 doesn't necessarily make a person a bad driver, but as a group, older drivers are more prone to cause car crashes — even as they drive less. Declining skills and vision, slower reaction time and potentially reduced mental acuity are all factors.

One of the MVA statistics that leaps out is that while younger drivers are involved in more crashes — peaking at age 25-34 — the proportion of drivers who are at fault in crashes turns sharply upward after age 55. Indeed, licensed drivers age 80 or over are as likely as teens to be at fault in accidents.

Yet while Maryland has done much in recent years to address teen drivers, including restrictions on driving hours and passengers, little has been done about senior drivers. Under current rules, older drivers whose abilities are in doubt can be referred to the MVA's medical advisory board (by a police officer, physician, court or family member) for evaluation.

But such a process is most often triggered by a crash or by a family member's decision to confront a driver of failing ability. Not all families are willing or able to do that. And waiting for an accident is a potential disaster in the making.

What many other states have done is to establish shorter renewal intervals for drivers' licenses past a certain age — typically, 70 or older. In Illinois, for instance, licenses must be renewed every two years beginning at 81. In Iowa, that requirements kicks in at 70. In Hawaii, 72.

That gives licensing authorities an opportunity to screen renewal applicants for potential problems. It's a policy that's been recommended to states, including Maryland, by the

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

Unfortunately, Maryland has been going in the opposite direction. Last year, the General Assembly approved longer renewal periods (going from five to eight years) for all drivers. And since drivers only have to appear at an MVA office every other renewal, that means a 70-year-old approved for renewal may not have to appear in person again until age 86.

That 16-year gap is clearly a mistake, given the reality of crash statistics. Yet lawmakers resisted the idea of more frequent screenings of older drivers last year — and appear unlikely to take corrective action until the MVA's two-year study on older-driver safety is completed next year.

No doubt some lawmakers perceive such resistance as a principled stand against age discrimination (or perhaps a sop to older voters). But in reality, time catches up to everyone. The General Assembly's failure to tackle this issue now only puts more people, including drivers, passengers, pedestrians and bicyclists, in danger for the next 12 months.

What the Krasnopolers and others who support their nonprofit advocacy group, Americans for Older Driver Safety, would like to see is not only shortened driver license renewal periods for older drivers but more referrals to the medical advisory board and raised awareness of the problems of older drivers generally.

None of that seems the least bit unreasonable. And it's not just an issue for Maryland. The older driver population is growing as the numbers of Americans age 65 or older rises from the current 40 million to 88.5 million by 2050.

Showing up at the MVA to renew a driver's license every two years may sound like a hassle, but it can also be a lifesaver. Just ask Susan Cohen and Mitchell Krasnopoler, who lost their son two years ago this month. Some "accidents" are potentially avoidable.

Frequent License Renewals Proposed for Older Drivers

Cumberland Times-News

February 23, 2013

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

Eight-year cycle now in place

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.

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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.

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

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Frequent License Renewals Proposed for Older Drivers

Baltimore Post-Examiner

February 20, 2013

<http://baltimorepostexaminer.com/frequent-license-renewals-proposed-for-older-drivers/2013/02/20>

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Drivers, Old and Young

Frederick News Post.com

February 24, 2013

http://www.fredericknewspost.com/sections/opinion/display_editorial.htm?StoryID=147291#.UStsP4letjs

The coming surge in older drivers, and a possible uptick in the number of crashes they could cause, was the subject of a briefing this week to delegates on the Environmental Matters Committee.

A panel presented some of the latest data collected by the Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration, and pointed firmly at drivers 65 and older as being at increased risk of causing an accident, a demographic that will only grow as the Baby Boomer generation ages into its later years over the next three decades. The MVA is in the middle of a two-year study investigating of issues related to older drivers. The final report is due in January 2014.

Based on the interim report, which was not immediately publicly available, those advocates argued reasonably for more robust screening for older drivers.

Specifically, the age group most at risk of causing an on-road accident are drivers 80 and older. According to the Administration on Aging, about 20 million Americans are estimated to be 80 and older by 2050, triple today's population. We can predict from that an uptick in the number of crashes. Increasing the risk of crashes, about 40 percent of people 85 and older are estimated to suffer some form of dementia.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, young drivers are the most likely to be injured or killed in a vehicle crash. Between 2007 and 2011 in Maryland, 15,801 crashes involved young drivers aged 16 to 20; an average of nearly 10,000 people involved in those crashes were injured and roughly 90 people a year died. Nationwide, from 1998 to 2007, NHTSA data show 39 to 43 percent of teen drivers aged 15 to 20 were killed in crashes involving a fatality. In 1998, 8,819 fatal crashes involved a teen driver. That declined slightly to 7,650 in 2007. Compare that to fatalities for 65 and older drivers from 2000 to 2009, which declined 18 percent, from 3,997 to 3,297, NHTSA states, while the population of the age set has increased 13 percent, from 3.5 million to nearly 4 million across the same period.

This information available seems to indicate a more nuanced approach is necessary to gauge driver fitness after a crash. The Legislature, if it chooses to take on this issue, should not deal exclusively with senior drivers when there's another demographic that also needs scrutiny.

A system for the review of problematic older drivers does exist through the Driver Wellness and Safety Division to help filter out older drivers who may need to retire from the road. Drivers can be reported for review to the Medical Advisory Board, which determines how capable a person is to operate a motor vehicle. In the case of age, law enforcement, physicians, courts and family members can make the referral.

That program, where it deals with senior drivers, can be made stronger. The number of referrals for medical review has been decreasing, according to the MVA. When the program began in 2009, 6,374 people were reviewed, by 2012, 4,374. Perhaps it's not easy enough or not enough people know

reviews are available, and perhaps reviews should be triggered automatically for drivers 70 years and older following an accident.

And, as with other states, we'd support more frequent license renewals to bolster screening. The AAA recommends every five years for drivers 75 and older. That's reasonable. Maryland took a step backward on this measure last year, when it increased the period between renewal times for all drivers from five to eight years.

It's important those renewals be in person because, as AAA recommended at the Environmental Matters briefing, counter clerks can be trained in recognizing renewal applicants who may need referral, a practice in place in Florida, Wisconsin and Hawaii.

Maryland has taken the solid step of strengthening the laws for young drivers, creating three tiers of licenses to transition from learners to provisional drivers, and finally to full drivers' licenses. Each has some solid provisions aimed at prevention of teen-driving accidents.

What we'd also like to see is a review program for younger drivers who are in an accident. Obviously, it wouldn't be for the same reasons older drivers face as they age, which are normally health related; young drivers' accidents are frequently caused by driver error or speed leading to loss of control.

But the program could be a matter of reviewing what led to the accident, and depending on its seriousness, formulating a corrective plan that leads to a round of renewed, rigorous retraining following a collision.