

# Family of Ellicott City Student Killed in Crash Speaks Out

The family of Nathan Krasnopoler is fighting legislation that would lengthen time between drivers license renewals.

By Adam Bednar  
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Police investigate the scene after 20-year-old Nathan Krasnopoler was struck on University Parkway in February. Credit Adam Bednar

A proposed bill that would lengthen the time period between driver license renewals in Maryland is being criticized by the family of a Johns Hopkins student from Ellicott City who died last year as a result of an accident involving an elderly motorist.

Senate Bill 111, which has been introduced at the request of the Maryland Department of Transportation, would extend the time between driver license renewals from the current five-year cycle to eight years for drivers older than 21.

Susan Cohen is the mother of Nathan Krasnopoler who was involved in accident while riding his bicycle in February on West University Parkway with a vehicle operated by Jeanette Marie Walke, 84. He later died from injuries suffered in accident. Susan Cohen contends the proposed bill would put more people in danger.

“It’s time for Maryland to improve public safety,” Cohen said.

John Kuo, administrator of the Motor Vehicle Administration, said he feels sympathy for Krasnopoler’s family, but said he feels the state is taking adequate steps to ensure its drivers are safe.

Kuo said drivers with possible issues could be reported to the Medical Advisory Board or the Division of Driver Wellness and Safety. He said Maryland has already taken steps, such as its graduated licensing program, to make sure younger drivers are safe behind the wheel.

He said that a number of jurisdictions along the East Coast including New York, Washington, D.C. and Florida already have driver licenses with eight year durations, and that data from those states shows extended license renewal isn’t increasing the risk of anyone on the road.

Kuo also said if the extended licenses are passed that it would create smoother operations at local MVAs, and that the program would not be fully implemented until 2028 because the extended license years would be staggered.

Opponents of the bill argue that extending the renewal period and, as a result, the time between basic eye exams, would put more people at risk. Instead, critics are asking that the period between license renewals remains at five years, and that drivers be required to take a Functional Capacity Test every other renewal period.

Cohen argued there has been enough research conducted on these tests show their accuracy and that the tests can help prevent loss of life by keeping motorists off the road who should not be driving.

“The research backs up the initiative on the part of my family,” Cohen said.

Krasnopoler, 20, was left in a coma with irreversible brain damage following the accident and his family decided to remove his feeding tube in August.

Walke pleaded guilty to negligent driving and failure to yield the right-of-way to a cyclist in a bike lane and was fined.