November 16, 2026

The Honorable Mike Johnson
Speaker
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Thune
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
Democratic Leader
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Johnson, Majority Leader Thune, Minority Leader Schumer, and Democratic Leader Jeffries:

We write to express our strong opposition to S. 5274 and H.R. 10067, legislation that would repeal a municipal regulation requiring motorcycle riders in Washington, D.C., to wear helmets.

Motorcycles are the most dangerous mode of motor vehicle transportation, accounting for a disproportionate percentage of deaths and injuries on our nation's roadways. In 2024 alone, 6,228 motorcyclists were killed in motor vehicle crashes, accounting for 16 percent of all traffic fatalities that year, even though motorcycles accounted for only 0.7 percent of vehicle miles traveled.[1] Since 1997, motorcyclist deaths have nearly tripled, pushing the fatality rate for motorcyclists to nearly 27 times that of passenger vehicle occupants.[2] Further, an estimated 86,887 motorcyclists were injured in 2024.[3]

Our nation's capital is not immune from the risks of riding a motorcycle. In the last 10 years, 68 motorcyclists have been killed in crashes.[4] Seven fatalities have occurred just this year, constituting nearly a quarter of all motor vehicle deaths in the District of Columbia.[5] Of course, motorcycles are not confined to state boundaries. Unhelmeted motorcyclists leaving the nation's capital could exacerbate motorcycle risks in the neighboring Maryland and Virginia. In 2024, 122 motorcycle fatalities occurred in Virginia, and 95 motorcycle fatalities occurred in Maryland.[6]

[1] NHTSA, "Motorcycle," Traffic Safety Facts 2024 Data, July 2026.

[2] *Id*.; The Washington Post, "GOP Lawmakers Move to Scrap D.C.'S Motorcycle Helmet Law as Road Deaths Rise," 10 August 2026, https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-va/2026/08/10/republican-lawmakers-are-trying-repeal-dcs-motorcycle-helmet-mandate/.

[3] NHTSA, "Motorcycle," Traffic Safety Facts 2024 Data, July 2026.

[4] Vision Zero, "DC Vision Zero Traffic Fatalities and Injuries," https://dcvisionzero.github.io/Crash-Injury-Dashboard/, 25 August 2026.

[5] *Id*.

[6] *See* note 3.

The "Ride in Freedom Act" responds to this pressing roadway safety and public health issue by making motorcycle riding less safe. The legislation repeals a municipal regulation requiring motorcycle riders in the District of Columbia to wear helmets.[7] In addition, the bill bars the actual elected representatives of Washington, D.C. from replacing the invalidated law.[8]

Universal helmet laws are among the most effective policies to address the unacceptably high number of motorcyclist deaths and injuries. According to studies, helmet use prevents 37 percent of fatalities among motorcycle operators and 41 percent of fatalities among motorcycle passengers.[9] In 2017, helmets saved the lives of 1,872 motorcycle riders and could have saved 749 more if those riders had worn helmets.[10] Between 1976 and 2022, more than 22,000 fatalities could have been prevented if all states required riders to wear helmets.[11] The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that universal helmet laws are "the most effective strategy to increase helmet use."[12]

Riding a motorcycle without a helmet will ultimately culminate in unnecessary deaths, avoidable injuries, and higher healthcare costs.[13] All of society bears these consequences, not just the motorcycle rider.[14] In 2019, motorcycle rider deaths and injuries resulted in $16.9 billion in economic costs, including medical care, legal costs, emergency services, insurance administrative costs, workplace costs, congestion impacts, and property damage.[15] Deaths and injuries suffered by motorcycle riders amounted to $107.1 billion in comprehensive costs, which include economic costs and lost quality of life.[16] Helmet use prevented an estimated $3.2 billion in economic costs in 2019, and universal helmet use could have prevented another $1.4 billion.[17]

Invalidating local motorcycle helmet laws will particularly strain our healthcare sector, putting upward pressure on already sky-high healthcare costs. After two decades of steep increases, household healthcare expenditures reached $6,069, or 8 percent, of household disposable income in 2024.[18] Just two decades earlier, healthcare spending per household was $2,447 per year, or 5.9 percent of all household expenditures.[19] Since 2002, household expenditures on healthcare increased by 176 percent, 102 percentage points higher than the

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[7] S. 5274; H.R. 10067

[8] *Id*.

[9] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Helmet Use Among Motorcyclists Who Died in Crashes and Economic Cost Savings Associated With State Motorcycle Helmet Laws — United States, 2008–2010," 15 June 2012, https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6123a1.htm.

[10] NHTSA, "Lives and Costs Saved by Motorcycle Helmets, 2017," Traffic Safety Facts, December 2019.

[11] Insurance Institute for Highway Safety. "The Human Cost of Allowing Unhelmeted Motorcycling in the United States," Journal of Safety Research, 14 March 2025.

[12] *See* note 8.

[13] NHTSA, "The Economic and Societal Impact of Motor Vehicle Crashes, 2019 (Revised)," February 2023, https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813403.

[14] *Id*.

[15] *Id*.

[16] *Id*.

[17] *Id*.

[18] The Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Consumer Expenditure Surveys," accessed 30 December 2025, https://www.bls.gov/cex/.

[19] *Id*.

change in price of all other goods and services combined.[20] These exorbitant healthcare costs are leaving Americans with less disposable income to spend on other essential goods and services.

Congress should not repeal a proven safety requirement or deny D.C.'s elected government the authority to protect residents and visitors. We urge you and your congressional colleagues to oppose S. 5274 and H.R. 10067.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

National Consumers League

AAA

Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety

American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons

American College of Emergency Physicians

American College of Emergency Physicians, District of Columbia Chapter

American College of Preventive Medicine

American Public Health Association

American Trauma Society

BioInjury, LLC.

Center for Auto Safety

Consumer Federation of America

Consumers for Auto Reliability and Safety

District of Columbia Fire and EMS Department

Emergency Nurses Association

Families for Safe Streets

George Washington University Hospital

Impact Teen Drivers

International Motorcycle Rider Coaching Association

Kids and Car Safety

Medical Society of DC

MedStar Health

Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments

National Association of Emergency Medical Technicians

National Coalition for Safer Roads

National Safety Council

Skilled Motorcyclist Association, for Responsible, Trained, and Educated Riders Inc.

State Motorcycle Safety Association[21]

ThinkFirst Foundation

Truck Safety Coalition

[20] National Consumers League, "Sticker Shock: Uncovering the Real Drivers of Rising Vehicle Prices," 3 February 2026, https://nclnet.org/strong-vehicle-safety-and-fuel-standards-save-families-thousands-without-harming-affordability-finds-the-national-consumers-league/.

[21] State Motorcycle Safety Association (SMSA) Position Statements: #15-01 Personal Protective Gear & #25-20 Motorcycle Operator and Passenger Helmet Use.