

WHEREAS, Vehicles designed to provide the desirable benefits of reducing harmful pollutants and operating with greater fuel efficiency, including gasoline-electric hybrid and electric-only vehicles, and in the future, other vehicles that rely on fuels and technologies other than the gasoline internal combustion engine, which operate or are likely to operate virtually soundlessly; and

WHEREAS, The Maryland Clean Cars Act of 2007, which requires that by 2011 a certain percentage of the vehicles sold in this State be vehicles that produce lower emissions, will increase the number of hybrid vehicles and other vehicles using technologies other than the gasoline internal combustion engine on the highways of this State; and

WHEREAS, Because blind pedestrians cannot locate and evaluate traffic using their vision, they must listen to traffic to discern its speed, direction, and other attributes in order to travel safely and independently; and

WHEREAS, Pedestrians, cyclists, runners, and small children who are not blind benefit from the multisensory information available from vehicle traffic, including the sound of vehicle engines; and

WHEREAS, Preliminary research conducted by the National Federation of the Blind, the nation's oldest and largest organization of blind people and the largest organized group of blind people in Maryland, indicates that when operating on electric power, hybrid vehicles cannot be heard by blind people and others and are, therefore, extremely dangerous when driving on the street, emerging from driveways, moving through parking lots, and in other situations where pedestrians and vehicles come in close proximity to one another; and

WHEREAS, Failure of this State to take immediate action to ensure that blind pedestrians can hear vehicles in all phases of operation is likely to lead to pedestrian injuries and fatalities; and

WHEREAS, Injuries and fatalities may be prevented through vehicle designs that take into account the multisensory nature of traffic detection and a requirement that vehicles emit a minimum level of sound in order to alert all pedestrians, and especially blind pedestrians, to their presence; now, therefore,

SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND, That:

- (a) There is a Maryland Quiet Vehicles and Pedestrian Safety Task Force.
- (b) The Task Force consists of the following members, appointed by the Governor in consultation with the Secretary of Transportation: