

ALBANY CALIFORNIA



CITY OF ALBANY
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May 17, 2021

Assemblymember David Chiu
State Capitol, Room 4112
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Support for AB 550 (Chiu) – The Safe Streets and Work Zones Act of 2021

Dear Assemblymember Chiu,

The City of Albany writes in strong support of Assembly Bill 550 – The Safe Streets and Work Zones Act of 2021. AB 550 protects the safety of vulnerable travelers and workers on California roads by giving several cities the option of creating speed safety pilot programs. This urgent measure is desperately needed to stem the tide of traffic violence in the state and protect drivers, pedestrians, cyclists, and workers traveling on our roadways.

Every year for the past five years, over 1,000 Californians have died in speed-related traffic collisions. Tens of thousands more have been injured. Moreover, despite the pandemic and related drop in driving, deaths from traffic incidents actually rose 8 percent from 2019 to 2020. Speeding is incredibly dangerous – it is the number one factor in crash severity. Eight out of ten people hit by a car going 40 mph or higher will die from their injuries.

Numerous empirical studies show that speed safety systems reduce speeding, crashes, injuries, and fatalities. AB 550 includes clear guardrails to protect privacy and equity. Citations under any pilot program will be civil in nature – not criminal – and will not result in a point on a driver’s record. Jurisdictions must also offer diversion options for low-income drivers unable to pay the full fine.

Traditional police enforcement of traffic laws has frequently put drivers of color at risk from implicit and explicit bias. Recent studies have shown that Black drivers in California are stopped by police at 2.5 times the rate of whites and are searched three times as often. This bill proposes an alternative, administrative-based model for speed detection that will protect public safety while being responsive to community needs. California must provide communities with the option to pilot this public safety tool in order to create the expectation of regular speed checking on the most dangerous streets.

AB 550 will prevent future deaths on our streets. For these reasons, the City of Albany is pleased to support AB 550.

Sincerely,

Ge'Neil Gary, Mayor
City of Albany