



Montgomery County

Office of Intergovernmental Relations

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HB 762

DATE: February 19, 2020

SPONSOR: Delegate Williams

ASSIGNED TO: Judiciary

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POSITION: SUPPORT (Montgomery County Department of Police)

Task Force to Study Impaired Driving and New Technologies

House Bill 762 would authorize the establishment of a Task Force to Study Impaired Driving and New Technologies to aid and assist law enforcement in detecting, deterring, and preventing impaired driving. The Task Force would be staffed by the Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention.

Despite technology having been advanced in many areas of law enforcement, little technological innovation has been realized when it comes to impaired driving, and of that, an even smaller amount of this technology has been adopted for use in Maryland. Roadside equipment to detect impaired driving has been used in several states, as well as in Canada, Europe, and Australia. Some of this equipment has been reliable, and it has assisted officers in making accurate arrest decisions that have resulted in getting impaired and dangerous drivers off the roads. These advances are especially important when it comes to drugged impaired driving. As national statistics indicate, drugged driving rates are on the rise. Because drug impairment presents differently from alcohol impairment, however, additional tools and impairment detection training are needed for Maryland's law enforcement officers.

While there are numerous studies on useful technological products for impaired driving, it is essential that this task force be specific to Maryland. Drug trends are not consistent across the country. Tools that help to best identify individuals driving under the influence of cocaine, for example, are not as relevant in Maryland as those that would help to identify cannabis or central nervous system depressant impairment. A good indicator of Maryland's needs is found when evaluating the State's drugged driving statistics in 2018. That year, there were a total of 861 individuals evaluated by drug recognition experts (DRE) due to suspicion of impaired driving while under the influence of drugs. This is an increase from six years ago

when 609 persons were evaluated. Of the 2018 evaluations, 27.2% of drivers arrested for driving under the influence of drugs were determined by the DRE to be under the influence of cannabis. This number has been rising for several years and has almost doubled since 2011. This finding is an example of only one drug category; a category that now has testing tools for law enforcement to include oral fluid testing, breathalyzers, and various computer-based phone apps to identify levels of impairment. These are all examples of tools that would, or could, be useful in Maryland, but have not been tested or implemented within the State.

The creation of a State task force to study impaired driving and evaluate new technologies that could be available to law enforcement will ultimately lead to enhanced highway and public safety in Maryland. Montgomery County Department of Police respectfully requests that the Committee adopt a favorable report on HB 762.