



State of Maryland
Department of State Police
Government Affairs Section
Annapolis Office (410) 260-6100

POSITION ON PROPOSED LEGISLATION

DATE: February 15, 2024

BILL NUMBER: House Bill 601 **Position:** Support

BILL TITLE: Street Racing and Exhibition Driving – Prohibited Acts, Enforcement, and Penalties

REVIEW AND ANALYSIS:

This legislation seeks to prohibit a person from engaging in exhibition driving on any highway or private property that is designated for use by the public. This legislation defines exhibition driving, and provides for enhanced penalties, including incarceration, upon conviction. The bill further authorizes local jurisdictions to establish special events zones which allow law enforcement to arrest for certain violations committed within the zone.

The Maryland General Assembly enacted similar legislation in 2019 specific to Ocean City, Maryland in an effort to reduce the dangerous and unlawful operation of motor vehicles during unsanctioned events within the town. The most famous is the H2Oi event. Ocean City historically has three unsanctioned car events throughout the year. With funding from the Maryland Highway Safety Office and partnerships with the Department of State Police and the Worcester County Sheriff's Office, the Ocean City Police Department has made a combined effort to reduce the illegal activities of these events and maintain vehicle and pedestrian safety in the town. due to the direct impact the law had on violator's in Ocean city, the event organizers have now taken their activities north.

House Bill 601 will allow for other jurisdictions throughout the State to use the same law and tools to make their roadways safer. Currently, law enforcement can only issue citations for these types of driving behaviors. If exhibition drivers commit these violations within a special event zone, they are now subject to arrest. This not only prohibits the driver from continuing to drive in this reckless manner, but also acts as a deterrent to driving in this manner in the future.

In jurisdictions throughout the State, there have been countless examples of speed contests and exhibition driving resulting in the death of either participants or spectators. Recently, the Washington Metro area has experienced a number of exhibitions driving events, closing the beltway or other roadways. In Montgomery County, approximately two weeks ago, exhibition drivers and street racers took over an intersection.

The Maryland General Assembly has allowed for the use of speed monitoring cameras in areas known to have such violations, and this legislation will add another tool for law enforcement and local governments to ensure the safety of all persons within the State.

As written, HB 601 expands the ability of law enforcement to take a successful program, as demonstrated by Ocean City, statewide to combat this very unsafe driving behavior.

State of Maryland
Department of State Police
Government Affairs Section
Annapolis Office (410) 260-6100

POSITION ON PROPOSED LEGISLATION

For these reasons, the Department of State Police urges the Committee to give House Bill 601 a favorable report.