



# Montgomery County

## Office of Intergovernmental Relations

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**HB 1160**

**DATE: February 29, 2024**

**SPONSOR: Delegate Wims**

**ASSIGNED TO: Environment and Transportation**

**CONTACT PERSON: Sara Morningstar (Sara.Morningstar@montgomerycountymd.gov)**

**POSITION: SUPPORT**

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### **Motor Vehicles – Allowing Unauthorized Use of a Motor Vehicle and Reckless, Negligent, and Aggressive Driving**

House Bill 1160 would increase the penalty for permitting a vehicle to be driven by an unauthorized person, enhance the definition of reckless driving, and strengthen the penalties for both reckless and negligent driving. Additionally, the bill would reduce from three to two the number of aggressive driving offenses committed at the same time or during a single and continuous period of driving by a motorist (including motorcycles). And finally, a motorist charged with aggressive driving would be required to appear in court, could not prepay the fine, and could be faced with graduated penalties including imprisonment, substantial fines or both. Montgomery County supports House Bill 1160.

Last October, Montgomery County Police Sgt. Patrick Kepp was seriously injured after being struck on I-270 by a reckless and aggressive driver who had repeatedly engaged in dangerous driving, including incidents where he operated his car at speeds well over 130 miles per hour. The Montgomery County Police Department was familiar with the teenage driver. He had been issued multiple citations, but he continued to engage in aggressive driving. In the early morning hours of October 18<sup>th</sup>, after receiving another report of dangerous driving by the notorious teen, Sgt. Kepp responded to the incident by driving to the section of I-270 where the car had been headed and deployed stop sticks in the road to deflate the driver's tires. Instead of the driver slowing down to prevent a crash, he drove into Sgt. Kepp causing the police officer to sustain crushing injuries to his legs resulting in necessary amputation. The driver has been charged with attempted first-degree murder, first-degree assault, and causing life-threatening injuries to Sgt. Kepp.

This should not have happened. Stronger State laws need to be in place to keep dangerous drivers off the roads. And for those individuals who willfully violate State traffic laws – and intentionally endanger public safety – the law should provide enhanced penalties, including the possibility of imprisonment for reckless, negligent, and aggressive driving. Montgomery County urges the Committee to adopt a favorable report on House Bill 1160.