



CITY TAKOMA OF PARK MARYLAND

Support House Bill 601 - Street Racing and Exhibition Driving – Prohibited Acts, Enforcement, and Penalties

House Environment & Transportation Committee

February 15, 2024

The City of Takoma Park supports and urges favorable consideration of HB 601.

This bill alters penalties and points assessments for vehicle violations related to participation in a race or speed contest and prohibits a person from engaging in exhibition driving on any highway or private property that is used for driving by the public. This bill is critically important to advance public safety as the region faces an increase in illegal street races.

The City of Takoma Park is in a cross-jurisdictional area with borders along Washington, DC as well as Prince George's County and Montgomery County. State highways in the City, like New Hampshire Avenue, are major throughfare for thousands of cars daily connecting Maryland to Washington, DC. However, more importantly, it is a stretch of highway that is heavily traveled by pedestrians commuting between home and work or frequenting local businesses.

On Saturday February 11, 2024, a large crowd of onlookers gathered in the City to watch reckless drivers turn doughnuts and burnouts at the intersection of New Hampshire and Ethan Allen Avenues. The group had the intersection blocked. There were hundreds of cars. And, while our officers were able to eventually take control of the chaotic scene, people could have died.

The actors involved in this incident willingly violated several of Maryland's current traffic laws because there are few consequences for doing so. HB 601 goes a step further than current laws by requiring that persons convicted of a violation be subject to 60 days in jail, up to a \$1,000 fine, or both. Additionally, in cases in which where there is serious bodily injury to another person, the prison sentence increases such that the offender can receive up to 1 year jail time. As an additional deterrent, the bill not only holds drivers accountable but also people who participate in the race such as timekeepers or flagman.

We shouldn't wait until a person dies to act. Takoma Park urges a favorable report on HB 601 so that we can collectively keep our streets safe.