



MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

DAWN LUEDTKE
COUNCILMEMBER
DISTRICT 7

February 13, 2024

The Honorable Delegate Marc Korman
Chair, Environment and Transportation Committee
251 Taylor House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: House Bill 601 – *Street Racing and Exhibition Driving - Prohibited Acts, Enforcement, and Penalties*

Dear Chair Korman:

I write in support of House Bill 601, which increases the penalties for motor vehicle violations related to participation in a race or speed contest and exhibition driving on any highway or private property that is used by the public for driving.

In the past four years, there has been a significant increase in exhibition driving events, which present dangers to drivers, pedestrians, bicyclists, and other road users. These events involve excessive, abrupt acceleration or deceleration; skidding, squealing, burning, or smoking of tires; swerving or swaying from side to side; the engine producing unreasonably loud, raucous, or disturbing noise; grinding the gears and the backfiring of the engine; the wheels losing contact with the ground; and transporting a passenger on or in an area of a motor vehicle that is not designed or intended for passenger transport such as the hood or roof. Participants often use vehicles and “human chains” to block roadways to other traffic, including first responders on their way to provide emergency care.

These events are happening throughout Montgomery County and in areas of the County Council District I represent, including the Intercountry Connector. The individuals engaging in

this conduct do so without regard for the safety of other motorists, pedestrians, and bicyclists performing maneuvers that may cause serious bodily injury or even death.

Montgomery County Police report several challenges in preemptively cracking down on this behavior. First, the planners of these events are very secretive about where and when the meetup will take place, often using a private social media account or encrypted channels to broadcast the location(s) where people should congregate. When police arrive, drivers scatter and head to the next location. Second, the details of the event often change in real-time, making it difficult for law enforcement to stay ahead of bad actors. Participants commonly swap out license plates and use false registrations while engaging in the meetups which results in limited utility of video or photographic evidence. While officers do engage in as many proactive measures as they can to prevent these incidents, legislation establishing stricter penalties will provide significant assistance in deterring future participation.

My constituents are deeply frustrated by the frequent instances of loud engine noise, speeding, and aggressive driving. They have been told time and again that increased enforcement tools and stronger penalties must occur at the State level. I know we are not alone in Montgomery County in dealing with this issue, and statewide action must occur in order to equip local jurisdictions with a stronger ability to diminish this conduct and keep our roads safe. **I respectfully request a favorable report on HB 601 from the Committee.**

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dawn Luedtke', written in a cursive style.

Dawn Luedtke

Cc: Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee