



COMMISSION ON AGING

January 26, 2024

Delegate Jared Solomon
Lowe House Office Building, Room 312
6 Bladen St., Annapolis, MD 21401

HB 318 SUPPORT

Dear Delegate Solomon:

I am writing on behalf of the Montgomery County Commission on Aging in support of HB318. The Commission is authorized by the Older Americans Act, P.L. 116 131, and was established by Montgomery County in 1974 to advise County government on the needs, interests and issues of older adult residents, and to advocate on their behalf at the local, state and national levels.

HB318 introduces a crucial addition to state law by creating a criminal penalty for mail theft, a provision that was previously absent. It further delineates escalating penalties based on the severity of the offense, such as the amount of mail stolen, theft from elderly or vulnerable citizens, theft of mail containing personal identifying information, and assault of mail carriers.

Montgomery County boasts a diverse and engaged older adult population, with residents 60+ constituting 22 percent of the County's total population, with a projected growth to 35 percent by 2040. Some older individuals cannot get to the post office and may rely more on the blue boxes or their own mailboxes than the rest of the population. Unfortunately, mail theft and assaults on postal carriers have become pressing concerns statewide. Instances include direct theft from blue mailboxes and armed robberies of mail carriers for their "arrow keys," a tool used to access mail receptacles in neighborhoods.

The Montgomery County Commission on Aging views the changes proposed by HB318 as a critical step in deterring and penalizing the rising frequency of these crimes. Here are some alarming incidents that underscore the urgency of addressing this issue:

- In January 2023, a man in Silver Spring was accused of robbing a U.S. Postal carrier at gun point.¹
- In April 2023, a postal worker in Chevy Chase threatened with a gun and robbed of USPS property.²

¹ <https://www.wusa9.com/article/news/local/maryland/man-charged-armed-robbery-mail-carrier-montgomery-county/65-d9739bb9-81f4-4007-8894-355a11610533>

² <https://patch.com/maryland/bethesda-chevychase/usps-letter-carrier-robbed-gunpoint-chevy-chase-officials>

Department of Health and Human Services

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www.montgomerycountymd.gov/hhs

A January 2024 AARP article cites a 2023 Gallup poll³ revealing more than twice as many Americans fear being the victim of a scam or having their identity stolen than fear being murdered. By making mail theft a state crime, including the abuse of "Personal Identifying Information," and imposing the extra sanctions on a victim who is an "elderly person" (age 68+) or a "vulnerable adult" will have special impact on older adults by reducing the stress and fear of being a victim of these crimes. Enacting HB 318 provides a swifter avenue for the State's Attorney's to pursue these egregious cases alleviating federal resources for more complex cases.

In conclusion, the Montgomery County Commission on Aging supports HB 318, recognizing it as a vital measure to strengthen state laws against mail theft, assault of mail carriers, mail identity theft, and theft from elderly or vulnerable citizens. The Commission urges your support of HB 318, considering it a crucial step in enhancing the safety of USPS workers and vulnerable elderly residents. Tackling this escalating problem today will contribute to preserving the integrity of one of our most longstanding, dependable, and valued public services.

Sincerely,

David Engel

David Engel, Chair

Montgomery County Commission on Aging

³ <https://news.gallup.com/poll/544643/scams-relatively-common-anxiety-inducing-americans.aspx?version=print>

Person in orange jacket with mail in their hand. November 25th at 2:11 am in Gaithersburg, 20878.



Excerpts from Nextdoor web portal from November 2023

nextdoor mailbox theft

Alex Brand - Parkridge - 25 Nov - 10w
 Parkridge neighborhood. Around 2:11am on Nov 25th someone was walking around opening mailboxes and going through them.

Linda Plummer - Parkridge - 8w
 I did find my mailbox door open with no mail inside this morning? I will consult with the mail carrier tonight. They have been coming around 7:00 pm after dark these days. Thanks for the heads up!

nextdoor mailbox theft

Show all results "mailbox theft"

Goshen Maryland - 28 Nov - 10w
 Mailboxes were all opened today on our street. Also strange guy dressed in black with a flashlight going through. Yards.

Julie Mcconnell - North Potomac - 23 Nov - 10w
 My husband was getting our mail yesterday late afternoon and a guy on a Segway scooter was checking all the mailboxes in our court. He bypassed our mailbox as well as another neighbor who was approaching his mailbox.

Liz Will - Gaithersburg, MD - 10w
 You should notify your bank to cancel any checks that were in your box - the criminals can wash them and rewrite them for large amounts of money....good luck!

Nadine Kujit - Goshen Maryland - 10w
 last year I had outgoing mail (some bills I was paying and other mail) stolen from my mailbox. the thieves took the checks I wrote for the bills and washed them and made the checks out to alias names for thousands of dollars. My bank cashed them all - it was almost \$9000 in total. Any mail that they stole that was not a check the thieves simply threw away. It took me months to sort this out at the bank but I eventually got the money back. I no longer mail anything from my mail box - I take it all to the post office and hand it to a person there. You can't use the blue mailboxes outside of the post office - the thieves steal mail from them too.

Dave Kay - Richter Farm Rd - 8w
 They opened a lot of our mailboxes the other night. I now have a hidden camera day/night set up to keep an eye on things. The crooks are multiplying exponentially.

Richard Wong - Deer Park - 8w
 Dave - sign up for this feature to make sure you're not missing anything: <https://www.usps.com/manage/informed-delivery.htm>.

Keith Hall - Stonebridge/Duffield Mill - 8w
 Hi Julie - you're likely not far from us. We've had multiple mailbox thefts in the community - two recently with our house and a neighbor's about a month apart. It's the first time I've heard about a segway though? Thanks for speaking out and don't be bullied into silence. Happy Thanksgiving!

Melyssa Savitz - Stonebridge/Duffield Mill - 8w
 Keith confirming. Someone stole a check out of our mailbox last week and have taken a good chunk of change from our bank account. Lesson learned.

Sam (Samantha) P. - Damascus, MD - 7w
 Nadine! this happened to my family last year as well. They did the washing the check and writing a check to them themselves thing. Now we don't mail checks at all anytime of the year via any method.

Joju S. - Cedar Valley - Edited 1 Nov - 10w
 Mail stolen from my mailbox - right in front of my eyes!!!

From my study, I saw a car slowing down at our intersection, turned in to our street, paused near my mailbox, and the passenger leaned out of window and took the mail from the mailbox. Its a black colored car. My outdoor camera picked up the event but cannot see the license plate or the leaned out passenger. Folks, after this event, I suggest not leaving any mail outgoing or delivered mail in the mailbox for long. There are predators watching. I wonder whether the raised flag on the mailbox gave the sign for these kids. Shame on them.

Anyone on Tall Pines Dr or Virginia Pines has a black car strolling down in their ring or outdoor camera around 9:30am today, please PM me.

Thanks.

Patty Sanders - Milestone Germantown - 11w
 Sadly, this has happened in our neighborhood too, about four years ago and ever since then, I take my mail to the post office.

John Smith - Gaithersburg, MD - 11w
 Call the police

Joju S. - Cedar Valley - 11w
 Patricia, I provided the video footage and there is a police case but can't see the license plates.