

NICOLE A. WILLIAMS, ESQ.  
Legislative District 22  
Prince George's County

Judiciary Committee

Chair, Public Safety Subcommittee

Vice Chair, Democratic Caucus

Chair, Prince George's  
County House Delegation



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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

March 5, 2024

The Honorable Delegate Luke Clippinger  
Chair of the House Judiciary Committee  
6 Bladen Street, Room 101  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

House Bill 1063

Good afternoon, Chair Clippinger, Vice Chair Bartlett, and the members of the House Judiciary Committee. I am Delegate Nicole Williams from District 22, and I will be testifying in favor of House Bill 1063, also known as **Criminal Organizations - Criminal Prohibitions, Civil Actions, and Forfeiture**. The purpose of this legislation is to add additional crimes to the gang statute by changing the current definition of “underlying crime.” The crimes that will be added are already established within the judicial system; however, they are not connected to gang-implemented crimes. The crimes that would fall under this statute are the use of firearms, the use of contraband, the impersonation of a police officer, the falsification of VIN numbers, and other crimes that occur in organized crime activity.

Within today’s Maryland judicial system, no form of penalization connects all the gang-instituted steps to auto theft. Individuals, usually from car chop shops but not excluding others, hold informal meetings with citizens to ask them to acquire specific car parts in exchange for compensation. These individuals engage in theft to obtain car parts, sometimes stealing the whole car. In these processes, people use firearms or other contraband to obtain the resources they were told to get. This results in mental and sometimes physical trauma to the owner of the vehicle. Additionally, the innocent owner of the vehicle may face financial hardships as they replace the missing pieces. These defendants then sell the car pieces to chop shops, making them unidentifiable and untraceable. Essentially covering up their tracks and making a profit off of other individuals' belongings. Today's legislation can only charge people who participate in this form of criminal activity on individual crimes. However, since these are organized crimes partaking by several individuals, they can be identified as “gang crimes.” This legislation redefines the definition of “underlying crimes” to ensure that justice can be established properly. People who engage in any part of the theft of vehicular parts will be penalized by the intensity of the entire crime. This includes the recipients who purchase products from defendants who knowingly and willingly participate in the crime.

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Motor vehicle thefts have more than doubled (105% increase) between 2019 and 2023. This highlights the extremely high rates at which these specific crimes occur. Establishing legislation that increases the penalization for all individuals involved will deter the overall crime. There will be a decrease in individuals stealing because they will be charged with the whole crime, even if they only engaged in a small portion. Decreasing the high rate of carjacking thefts will benefit the overall safety and well-being of the citizens of Maryland.

For these reasons, I urge this committee to give a favorable report on House Bill 1063.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Nicole Williams', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Delegate Nicole A. Williams, Esq.