

HB853_EvanSerpick_Crossover.pdf

Uploaded by: Evan Serpick

Position: FAV

March 25, 2025

Evan Serpick
Baltimore, Maryland 21209



TESTIMONY ON HB 853 - POSITION: FAVORABLE

Criminal Procedure - Petition to Reduce Sentence (Maryland Second Look Act)

TO: Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Evan Serpick, on behalf of Jews United for Justice (JUFJ)

My name is Evan Serpick. I am a resident of District 41 in Baltimore City. **I am submitting this testimony on behalf of Jews United for Justice in support of HB 853, the Maryland Second Look Act.** JUFJ organizes 6,000 Jews and allies from across Maryland in support of state and local social, racial, and economic justice campaigns.

Few ideas are more deeply ingrained in Jewish tradition and text than the idea of *teshuvah*, which translates as repentance or return. The Hebrew Bible is filled with stories of people making terrible mistakes. Each time, we are taught, there is an opportunity for repentance and return to the path of righteousness. Every year on Yom Kippur, Jews around the world atone for our sins and commit to *teshuvah*.

I hope that the General Assembly heeds this wisdom from the Jewish tradition and enshrines the right to a second chance in Maryland state law by finally passing the Second Look Act. The Second Look Act would allow people who have served at least 20 years in prison the opportunity to demonstrate their rehabilitation and receive a modified or reduced sentence. This rehabilitation-focused approach is preferred by crime victims by a 2-to-1 margin, according to the 2022 National Survey of Victims' Views.¹

This human-focused approach is not only a moral imperative, but a pragmatic one. It offers incarcerated people an incentive to maintain good behavior, helps reduce prison overcrowding, diminishes threats of violence, and ensures that people who have transformed over the years can positively contribute to their communities.

¹

<https://allianceforsafetyandjustice.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Alliance-for-Safety-and-Justice-Crime-Survivors-Speak-September-2022.pdf>

In addition, incarcerated individuals in their 40s and beyond and those convicted of the most serious crimes have the lowest recidivism rates. This was demonstrated as a result of the 2012 Unger v. Maryland decision: about improper jury instructions, 192 people with life sentences, who had served an average of 40 years in prison, were released with community support. Since their release, less than 4 percent have returned to prison.² It's estimated that the release of these Marylanders saved taxpayers \$185 million. Maryland could save more than a billion dollars over the next decade by building on this positive experience and passing the Second Look Act.

Perhaps most importantly, the Second Look Act would help undo the damage of decades of racist and false narratives about Black criminality. Maryland incarcerates the highest percentage of Black people in the country – 71 percent of our prison population, more than twice the national average. Maryland also leads the nation in sentencing young Black men to the longest prison terms, at a rate 25 percent higher than the next nearest state, Mississippi.³ This legislation would ensure that sentences can be reviewed based on our current understanding of fairness and racial justice.

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on HB 853.

² <https://www.sentencingproject.org/app/uploads/2024/03/Maryland-Second-Look.pdf>

³

https://justicepolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/justicepolicy/documents/Rethinking_Approaches_to_Over_Incarceration_MD_press_release.pdf

HB 963 - MoCo_Morningstar_FAV (GA 25) (Senate).pdf

Uploaded by: Sara Morningstar

Position: FAV



Montgomery County

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HB 963

DATE: March 25, 2025

SPONSOR: Montgomery County Delegation

ASSIGNED TO: Judicial Proceedings

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

POSITION: SUPPORT

Montgomery County – Highways – Maximum Speed Limits MC 1-25

House Bill 963 authorizes a local authority in Montgomery County to decrease the maximum speed limit on a highway without performing an engineering and traffic study.

The legislation represents a small step forward in Montgomery County's continuing commitment to eliminating traffic fatalities and severe injuries through its Vision Zero plan. The bill does not impact the County's authority to perform such studies. A similar measure passed the House in 2024 that included a provision to allow after one year the deployment of automated traffic enforcement (ATE) on roads with reduced speed limits. House Bill 963 does not include any ATE provision.

Montgomery County supports House Bill 963 and would urge a favorable report from the Committee.

2025-HB 963-SpeedLimitReduction v2-FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Seth Grimes

Position: FAV



HB 963 – Montgomery County - Highways - Maximum Speed Limits MC 1-25
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
Washington Area Bicyclist Association – FAVORABLE

March 25, 2025

Chair Smith and Committee Members,

WABA supports bill HB 963, which would allow speed-limit reduction to 15 MPH in Montgomery County without an engineering and traffic investigation.

Need

Speed kills. According to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), "Studies clearly show that higher speeds result in greater impact at the time of a crash, which leads to more severe injuries and fatalities." For instance, a 2011 technical report published by the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, "Impact Speed and a Pedestrian's Risk of Severe Injury or Death," found that the average risk of severe injury to a pedestrian increased with vehicle speed from 10% at 16 MPH, 25% at 23 MPH, 50% at 31 MPH, and by an even larger percentage at higher speeds.

Justification

Planning documents adopted by the Montgomery County Council including the county's Complete Streets Design Guide, Pedestrian Master Plan, and Master Plan of Highways and Transitways provide analysis, design, and engineering guidance that is equivalent to the engineering and traffic investigation currently required by Maryland Transportation Code. The Cities of Rockville and Gaithersburg have independent planning authority, however the county's design guide would be applicable to city owned streets and would fill gaps in city planning artifacts.

HB 963 would enable these jurisdictions to respond to local conditions on locally owned roads faster and at lower cost, by eliminating a redundant requirement, enabling them to make local streets safer.

Precedent

There is a precedent for HB 963. Transportation Article § 21-803 (5) states "Baltimore City may, without performing an engineering and traffic investigation, decrease the maximum speed limit on a highway under its jurisdiction." The reason for this exemption is that Baltimore City adopted a Complete Streets program in 2018. HB 963 would extend Baltimore's exemption to Montgomery County jurisdictions based on their equivalent programs.

Montgomery County Policy

The county's Complete Streets Design Guide was developed by Montgomery Planning and enacted by the Montgomery County Council. It is county policy. It designates a Target Speed of 20 MPH for Downtown Streets, Neighborhood Connectors, Neighborhood Streets, Neighborhood Yield Streets, and certain Country Roads, in particular for stretches where they "operate as neighborhood streets for short segments."

Recommendation P-9 of Montgomery County's Pedestrian Master Plan, adopted in October by the County Council, is "Comprehensively lower speed limits countywide." The text explains, *"Higher traffic speeds are directly linked to crash severity. In pursuit of Vision Zero, the county should continue efforts to lower speed limits in neighborhoods and along major roadways, with a goal of having the roadway's posted speed limit match the target speed outlined in the CSDG [Complete Streets Design Guide]."*

Montgomery County has been inhibited from reducing speed limits in accordance with county policy by the current engineering and traffic investigation requirement.

That's why we have Recommendation P-9a, to "Support state legislation to allow jurisdiction-wide speed limit reduction." The detail text reads, *"Montgomery County's ability to lower the posted and statutory speed limit along residential streets is limited by state law... The county should support all legislation that offers local agencies more flexibility in setting speed limits in line with county goals."*

HB 963 responds directly to a recommendation adopted by the Montgomery Planning Board and Council.

Summary

Reduction benefits are incontrovertible. Yet we have this lingering requirement for an investigation on a road-by-road basis, which is expensive and onerous. Please update code to eliminate a redundant requirement by advancing HB 963. WABA urges a favorable committee reading.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this legislation.

advocacy@waba.org

HB0963_ Montgomery County - Highways - Maximum Spe

Uploaded by: Steve Ashurst

Position: FAV

March 21, 2025

HB0963: Montgomery County - Highways - Maximum Speed Limits MC 1-25

Chair Smith and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee,

I support HB0963, which allows a reduction of the maximum speed limit in Montgomery County on a highway without performing an engineering and traffic investigation.

We know that reducing the speed of vehicles results in the reduction of injuries and fatalities, with the IIHS¹ having a quick summary. Unfortunately, the time it takes to implement changes where identified needs exist today is too long. In this common sense update, we are allowing the local DOT to make the changes needed to ensure all road users have a better chance of survival and reduced injury. Any crash interaction between a motor vehicle and vulnerable road user would ultimately be reduced outright due to everyone having longer reaction times.

As a frequent pedestrian and bicyclist, I know what it feels like to be hit while walking, buzzed by motor vehicles at or above the speed limit on a 35 mph road while I ride an inadequate 4-ft shoulder. I also drive and know that when I drive even a couple MPH below the speed limit on a 35 mph posted road, for example, I have much more time to react, and I'm much more likely to slow down and wait for pedestrians to cross roads.

If a section of road needs adjusting to better align with the design guidance offered from the local Complete Streets Design Guide or the Pedestrian Master Plan, then Montgomery County would be able to make those changes in a timely manner with this bill.

Anything we can do to help save lives for people navigating our roads in a motor vehicle, bicycle, scooter, wheel chair, or on foot is a step in the right direction.

I urge a favorable report from the committee so that it can be brought to the floor for a vote.

Sincerely,

Steve Ashurst
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¹ <https://www.iihs.org/topics/speed>

Takoma Park 2025 - HB 963 FAV - Maximum Speed Limi

Uploaded by: Talisha Searcy

Position: FAV



CITY TAKOMA OF PARK MARYLAND

Support House Bill 963 – Montgomery County - Highways - Maximum Speed Limits MC 1-25
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
March 25, 2025

The City of Takoma Park supports and urges favorable consideration of House Bill 963, which removes a requirement for a full engineering and traffic investigation before a local authority in Montgomery County can decrease the maximum speed limit on a local road. This is an amendment to the bill that gave the authority to reduce speed limits on local streets to Montgomery County and its local jurisdictions.

The City of Takoma Park is a densely developed, municipality of almost 18,000 people living within 2.4 square miles in Montgomery County which borders Washington DC. Due to our location and increased traffic flow in the area, many of our municipal streets are used as cut-throughs for drivers attempting to avoid traffic on major roads. This results in an increase in traffic volume and speeding through our residential neighborhoods. We do not have sidewalks on both sides of all the City's streets. Vehicle speed, therefore, is a concern with so many of our residents, especially school children, walking, biking, scooting, and waiting for a school bus on our local streets.

We thank the State Legislature for the original bill allowing municipalities the authority to decrease speed limits on city streets. But our City has found the cost of formal engineering and traffic studies for this simple change to be beyond our city's budget and staff capacity. Our police department is intimately familiar with the locations where speeding is a concern, and where lower speed limits are practical and appropriate. Removing the engineering study requirement would support our city's goals of creating a safer community for all residents, including pedestrians, bicyclists, and drivers.

In sum, the City of Takoma Park supports bill House Bill 963 as amended and urges a favorable committee vote.