



Thomas E. Dernoga
Council Member
District 1

January 18, 2022

Environment and Transportation Committee
House Office Building
6 Bladen St., Room 251
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: HB 102 Vehicle Laws - Race and Speed Contests - Penalties
Position: Support

Dear Chairman Barve and Members of the Committee,

I strongly urge you to give a favorable report to HB 102 to increase penalties and points assessments for violations related to participation in racing or speed contests.

I represent the furthest northern district of the county with three different legislative districts: 21, 23A, and 47B. We are adjacent to Montgomery, Howard, and Anne Arundel Counties. The district includes the unincorporated areas Adelphi, Beltsville, Calverton, Montpelier, South Laurel, West Laurel, Vansville and the municipalities of Laurel and College Park. I would like to thank Delegate Lehman for sponsoring this legislation.

HB 102 will create stronger deterrents such as points on an individual's license, a thousand dollar fine and a court appearance to combat the dangerous racing activities that is plaguing District 1 of Prince George's County. Currently, as the state law reads, individuals convicted for racing only see 5 points added to their license. Keep in mind, in order for an individual to receive a suspension or revocation of their license, the individual needs between 8 and 11 points or more than 12 points, respectively. HB 102 plans to implement these exact thresholds to effectively deter racers.

Vehicle racing affects our community in District 1. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, from 2009 to 2019, Prince George's County reported 273 fatal vehicle crashes as a result of speeding. Speeding and racing are connected issues. While racing is not the sole causation for motor vehicle fatalities, we can determine a connection between the action of racing and the required conditions shared between racing and fatal crashes. Conditions such as excessive speeds, reckless driving, and knowingly or unknowingly endangering the public. ZeroDeaths MD from the Maryland Department of Transportation, records 72 fatal crashes in 2019 and 101 in 2020, a 33 percent increase. Yet, the total number of crashes between 2019 and 2020 has a decrease of nearly 20 percent (2019: 9,182; 2020: 7,564). Meaning, fatalities from crashes are rising while overall crashes are decreasing.

Historical trends from traffic data show that each time an additional road safety concern has occurred, any action taken to solve the concern lowers traffic fatalities. According to data collected by the Maryland Department of Transportation, airbags, helmet laws, and primary seat belt laws resulted in a significant drop in fatalities. From 1987 to 2000, fatalities dropped from 830 to 598. Stricter laws and enforcements successfully work to reduce fatalities in vehicle accidents.

In District 1 of Prince George's County, we have received complaints and concerns of vehicles racing on following streets and roads:

- Snow Acres Drive (2 complaints)
- MD 197 near Muirkirk Road
- Muirkirk Road
- MD 295 & I-95
- Caverly to Montgomery Ave
- MD 197 & Briarcroft Lane (near Park and Ride)
- Montgomery Road
- Cherry Hill Road
- Briggs Chaney Road (2 complaints)
- Ammendale Road & Old Gunpowder Road
- Kenilworth Ave & Greenbelt Road
- Cordwall Drive & Brewer Road
- Santa Anita Drive
- Bentley Park Drive (3 homes hit by speeding/racing vehicles)
- Odell Road
- Buck Lodge Terrace
- Briarchip Street
- MD 198

Traffic calming devices can limit how fast drivers may drive. All traffic calming devices focus on getting drivers to slow down. In District 1, the complaints we have received from constituents come largely from those who live on either busier roads or much smaller, one-way, dead end roads. In Seattle, Washington from 2007 to 2010 speed contributed to 42% of the fatal crashes. The city took action by ensuring speed limit signs were highly visible, engaging neighborhoods and community associations, and upgrading speed limit signage near schools. Preliminary data from Seattle and the Department of Transportation showed that these strategies are effectively decreasing speed and reducing crashes. Another example from Lafayette, Louisiana showed that once traffic calming devices including "mini" roundabouts, speed humps, and chokers successfully decreased the number of drivers traveling over 23 miles per hour and increased the number of drivers traveling below 23 miles per hour.

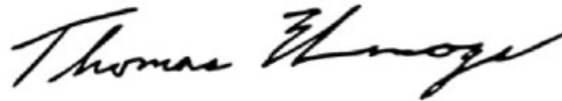
Additionally, we know that District 1 residents desire a change with vehicle racing. The following meetings have taken place throughout District 1:

- 2021-01-27 District 1 Citizens Advisory Council (CAC Hyattsville) meeting
- 2021-01-28 District 6 Citizens Advisory Council (CAC Beltsville) meeting
- 2020-10-28 District 1 Citizens Advisory Council (CAC Hyattsville) meeting
- 2021-03-24 District 1 Citizens Advisory Council (CAC Hyattsville) meeting
- 2020-11-12 West Laurel Civic Association (WLCA) Board meeting

Each meeting addressed constituents' concerns with vehicle racing and concluded that vehicle racing is a state issue that should be acted on with haste. Other constituents pointed out that adding more street signs will not be enough. Drivers will continue to run stop signs and speed if they are not facing higher consequences.

This is the right thing to do and I firmly stand with Delegate Lehman in supporting this legislation. For the reasons stated above, I respectfully request a **favorable report** for HB 102. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thomas E. Dernoga". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent "T" and "D".

Thomas E. Dernoga

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