

HB0231 - SUPPORT

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My name is Joe Reinhard, and I am writing to voice support for HB0231 on behalf of Montgomery County's Young People for Progress (YPP). We are a community organizing and social justice organization of young people in Montgomery County that strives to create power among youth and young adults. Over the past year, YPP has focused on bringing systemic changes to policing in Montgomery County. We are very pleased to support HB0231 as a good first step to making some of those changes to the way we view policing in the county and state.

As a community, we have asked too much of police over the past few decades and burdened them with too many responsibilities outside their core duties. Modern police and police departments are responsible for an ever-increasing number of government functions and services that have nothing to do with crime. This pushes police and police departments to be generalists because they are responsible for more, often unrelated, government functions. Allowing other departments to take more responsibility for services around issues in which they specialize will give the public more effective service and support. To paraphrase Councilmember Evan Glass, the Department of Health handles health violations and the Department of Housing handles housing violations; why should this be different with transportation violations? Dangerous driving is a plague on our streets, and just like we would not ask police to handle a literal plague, we should not have police officers responsible for street safety. By asking an organization whose responsibility is street safety to handle automated traffic enforcement, we allow the police to focus on more important matters to police while our Department of Transportation handles tasks they are better equipped for in the long term.

We see this bill as beneficial to the police as well. And while we acknowledge that this bill does not reduce the racial disparities we see in MCPD police stops nor reduce the number of traffic stops, it does ultimately start to unburden the police and allow them to focus more exclusively on serious crime. In these increasingly tense times, we need police to focus on fighting violent and serious crime while we ask other departments to look to take on more responsibility. Passage of Bill 18-22 to move automated traffic enforcement to MCDOT is an important step to unbundle policing and have more effective traffic safety in Montgomery County.

Thank you.