



# Montgomery County

## Office of Intergovernmental Relations

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**HB 7**

**DATE: January 19, 2022**

**SPONSOR: Delegate Szeliga**

**ASSIGNED TO: Judiciary**

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

**POSITION: SUPPORT (Montgomery County Department of Police)**

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### **Reckless and Negligent Driving – Death of Another – Must-Appear Violation (Sherry’s and Christopher’s Law)**

House Bill 7 seeks to strengthen Maryland’s vehicle laws surrounding reckless and negligent driving that results in the death of another person. Montgomery County Department of Police supports this legislation to promote traffic safety and acknowledge the suffering of the family members of those killed in traffic collisions.

Reckless driving is a crime in Maryland that is classified as a misdemeanor – currently subject to six points and a “scheduled” fine of \$500. Negligent driving is also classified as a misdemeanor and subject to points, but violators receive a lesser “scheduled” fine of \$180 if contributing to an accident. Reckless driving involves “wanton or willful disregard” for safety of persons or property whereas negligent driving involves driving in a “careless and imprudent manner” that endangers life or property.

The legislation proposes that reckless and negligent driving contributing to the death of a person should be penalized more strongly than the same acts that merely damage property. Drivers whose reckless or negligent actions have contributed to the death of another person will no longer have the option of prepaying a scheduled fine and will instead be required to appear in court to account for their actions. Attending a court appearance is often an important part of the healing process for deceased victims’ family members, who frequently express grief and frustration to members of Montgomery County Department of Police’s Collision Reconstruction Unit that drivers can simply pay a fine after causing the death of their loved one.

Montgomery County Department of Police supports HB 7 and urges the Committee to adopt a favorable report.