

Testimony HB1029.2023.pdf

Uploaded by: Claudia Barber

Position: FAV

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE MARYLAND HOUSE ENVIRONMENT AND
TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE
THURSDAY, MARCH 9, 2023 AT 1 PM
HOUSE BILL 1029 – PUBLIC SAFETY – LIGHTS ON FOR MARYLAND PROGRAM –
ESTABLISHMENT**

Presented by Claudia Barber, member of the Caucus of African American Leaders

Good evening Chair Kumar Barve and Vice Chair Dana Stein.

The Caucus of African American Leaders endorses establishing the Lights On for Maryland Program to authorize law enforcement agencies to provide vouchers to drivers detained at traffic stops. We believe the law could and should expand to law enforcement using the voucher program in lieu of issuing a citizen a citation for a broken tail light or similar headlight or tail light failure, especially when many rely on transportation to travel to and keep their jobs. They cannot afford losing a day's pay fighting a traffic citation of this minor nature.

Over the years, the Caucus has met with many state and local officials and provided statistical data on traffic stops in several jurisdictions. We have seen firsthand, disparity in treatment of citizens stopped by law enforcement at traffic stops for simple minor offenses such as a broken tail lights.

In 2021, Maryland State Senator Charles Sydnor, provided the following link to his constituents of a Baltimore County Traffic Stop Data Dashboard:

<https://www.baltimorecountymd.gov/county-news/2021/06/04/baltimore-county-releases-traffic-stop-data-dashboard>

This traffic stop data illustrates how Blacks, who make up a smaller percentage of the population than whites in Baltimore County, were stopped **56 percent** of the time for minor traffic offenses. This racial profiling is rooted in racism and

demonstrates that police are policing neighborhoods differently. It is not enough to collect these statistics and then do nothing!

There are even retired police officers who are members of the Caucus, who have been stopped by law enforcement for frivolous reasons and can relate to the harassment and abuse that citizens of color experience every day at the hands of police.

Many Black men feel very uncomfortable when stopped by police because they see it as an act of intimidation as they are often required to answer a multitude of questions that have nothing to do with the traffic stop, such as where are you going, and do you have any drugs in the car? Some law enforcement officers go as far as to make false accusations that they smell drugs or alcohol when there is neither.

Many times, frivolous traffic stops lead to the death of individuals who, if they were white, would undoubtedly still be alive. We have proof of this in the cases of Leroy Perry in Glen Burnie, Maryland, Sandra Bland in Texas, Terrence Crutcher in Oklahoma, Philando Castille in Minneapolis, and Walter Scott in Charleston, South Carolina.

We often ask why aren't upscale neighborhoods seeing the same number of traffic stops of citizens as other neighborhoods. Surely broken tail lights occur on all operating vehicles, driven by the rich and the poor.

It concerns us greatly that the length of traffic stops for various citizens varies according to race. We see this legislation as a step in the right direction. We ask that this committee issue a favorable report on this legislation.

Thank you, House Environment and Transportation Committee members, and Mr. Chairman for your time.

HB 1029 - UMD Favorable testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: David Mitchell

Position: FAV



**HB 1029 - Public Safety - Lights On for Maryland Program - Establishment
Environment and Transportation Committee
Favorable**

March 9, 2023

Chair Barve, Vice-Chair Stein and Members of the Committee,

The University of Maryland Police Department (UMPD) launched one of our newest proactive community initiatives, **Lights On!** in February of 2021. This is a community-driven program, which offers repair vouchers instead of traffic tickets for participating law enforcement agencies and communities they serve. The program both increases safety and builds good-will and trust between police and the community.

Officers can provide drivers with Lights On! vouchers redeemable for free repairs of broken lights at our local partner auto shop. Each voucher has a \$250 limit and each voucher has a serial number for accountability purposes. When presenting the voucher to the driver, the officer will also issue a written warning, to ensure that we comply with TR 25-113 (traffic stop data collection). Officers explain the voucher process to the driver so they can get their light fixed promptly. Once received, the vouchers are valid for up to 14 days to maintain traffic safety. This program is a win-win for our community and local citizens in the surrounding area.

LightsOn! is a Minneapolis-based organization formed to reduce fatal traffic stops after the 2016 killing of Philando Castile, who had been pulled over by police nearly 50 times for minor traffic violations. Many members of our community are fearful of being stopped by the police, and while the vast majority of stops proceed without incident, the economic consequence of even a ticket can be devastating to a single head of household. Lights On! allows for a routine traffic stop for students and community members to turn into an opportunity to fix their cars for free or at a discount and also create positive interactions between police and the community.

We have seen the success of the Lights On! Program at UMPD and are supportive of Delegate Solomon's bill to expand this program throughout the State.

Thank you for your consideration and we urge a favorable report on HB 1029.

HB 1029 Fav Auto Repairs Solomon 3-9.pdf

Uploaded by: Samuel Jordan

Position: FAV



**Testimony for HB 1029 Lights on for Maryland Program
Environment and Transportation Committee March 7, 2023**

Chairman Barve and Committee, greetings, I am Samuel Jordan, President of the Baltimore Transit Equity Coalition (BTEC). We urge you to report favorably on HB 1029.

HB 1029 was borne in tragedy. “US law enforcement killed at least 1,176 people in 2022, making it the deadliest year on record for police violence since 2013” according to the research group Mapping Police Violence. “Police across the country killed an average of more than three people a day, or nearly 100 people every month last year.”

The racial disparities have also persisted. From 2013 to 2022, Black residents were three times more likely to be killed by US police than white people. Advocates say that many of the routine traffic stops have no relation to public safety but are used to profile certain communities.

HB 1029 creates a chain of local commerce and good will in response to all too many traffic stops particularly of Black people who are subsequently violently assaulted - even killed by police. Murdered for “driving while Black.”

Despite the national increase in killings, there are some signs of progress.

HB 1029 is such a sign of progress. The bill orients trained police to seek non-violent, respectful encounters with drivers whose vehicles are in need of what may be minor repairs.

BTEC applauds the sponsors of HB 1029 and advocates for its passage. The bill proposes alternative responses that are already being piloted showing they are dramatically more effective than police.

My remarks have focused on the harm to be prevented. Because the remedy proposed in HB 1029 is a creative, productive step forward that can hardly be opposed. The funds are available. The connection to local commerce is stipulated and the trust factor is built between communities and the police. The motto “Protect and Serve” becomes a factual description of the encounter instead of a cynical jeer.

Chairman Barve and Committee, BTEC urges a favorable report on HB 1029. Thank you.

HB1029, Lights On!, FAV, Don Samuels & Sherman Pat

Uploaded by: Sherman Patterson

Position: FAV

HB1029 Remarks

Don Samuels, CEO

Sherman Patterson, President

- 1. Origins and Philosophy of Lights On!:** After the tragic death of Philando Castile, the MicroGrants Board of Directors discussed ways that they could prevent such a terrible event from happening again. MicroGrants already had connections to low-income drivers, auto repair shops, and law enforcement. MicroGrants CEO Don Samuels, former Public Safety Chair of the Minneapolis City Council, called a number of police departments to ask whether they were interested in joining the program. Since then, the program has grown dramatically as our story has spread. Lights On! continues to grow rapidly as interested law enforcement agencies, auto shops, cities, and nonprofits contact MicroGrants and ask to join.

- 2. Success Testimonials**
 - a. Police Chiefs – Lights On! currently has **141 Law Enforcement Partners**
 - b. Drivers – To date, over **8,000 Lights On! vouchers** have been redeemed
 - c. Auto Shop Owners – Lights On! currently has **283 auto shop partners**

HB1029 Bill Testimony.docx (1).pdf

Uploaded by: Maryland Legislative Latino Caucus

Position: FWA



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TO: Delegate Kumar P. Barve, Chair
Delegate Dana Stein, Vice Chair
Environment and Transportation Committee Members
FROM: Maryland Legislative Latino Caucus
DATE: March 7th, 2023
RE: HB1029 Public Safety Lights On for Maryland Program –

Establishment

The MLLC supports HB1029 Public Safety – Lights On for Maryland Program – Establishment

The MLLC is a bipartisan group of Senators and Delegates committed to supporting legislation that improves the lives of Latinos throughout our state. The MLLC is a crucial voice in the development of public policy that uplifts the Latino community and benefits the state of Maryland. Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to express our support of HB1029.

Lights On! provides vouchers for bulb repairs to better support low-income drivers to be compliant with traffic laws. The voucher covers up to \$250 of repairs, allowing drivers to fix their light without choosing between repairs, fines, or other necessities. This bill helps move Maryland away from criminalizing poverty when people can't afford to repair their cars and are fined or cited for not doing so. The poverty rate for Latinos in Maryland is 15.6%.¹ It also strengthens the positive interaction between police officers and community members - only 46% of Hispanics say they have a great deal or fair amount of confidence in local police to treat Hispanics and whites equally.² Furthermore, traffic stops for immigrants with or without immigration status, may come with yet another potential repercussion: deportation.³

HB1029 establishes the Lights On for Maryland Program to be administered through the Governor's Office of Crime Prevention, Youth, and Victim Services, which authorizes law enforcement agencies to provide vouchers to drivers detained at traffic stops to cover the costs of vehicle equipment repairs such as a headlight, taillight, brake light, or turn signal at certain auto repair shops. This bill will facilitate improved police-community relations and improve safety on the roads.

For these reasons, the Maryland Legislative Latino Caucus respectfully requests a favorable report on HB1029.

¹ [Poverty Rate by Race/Ethnicity. \(2022, October 28\). Kaiser Family Foundation.](#)

² [Krogstad, J. M. \(n.d.\). Latino confidence in local police lower than among whites. Pew Research Center.](#)

³ Johnson KP. Americanbar.org.
https://www.americanbar.org/groups/public_interest/immigration/generating_justice_blog/from-traffic-stop-to-deportation-order--black-immigrant-and-crit/. Published March 1, 2021. Accessed March 7, 2023.

HB 1029 MSP Opposition paper.pdf

Uploaded by: Kathy Anderson

Position: UNF



State of Maryland
Department of State Police
Government Affairs Section
Annapolis Office (410) 260-6100

POSITION ON PROPOSED LEGISLATION

DATE: March 9, 2023

BILL NUMBER: House Bill 1029 **Position:** Oppose

BILL TITLE: Public Safety – Lights On for Maryland program - Establishment

REVIEW AND ANALYSIS

This legislation establishes a Lights On for Maryland Program grant within the Governor’s Office of Crime Prevention, Youth, and Victim Services (GOCPYVS). The grant is designed to provide vouchers, valued up to \$250 each, to individuals detained by law enforcement to cover the costs of repairing headlights, tail lights, turn signals, etc. A law enforcement officer would be required to issue a voucher to certain segments of the motoring population. The bill further mandates that the Maryland Department of State Police (MDSP) shall participate and provide 100% of matching funds for the vouchers used by MDSP.

Under current law, some grants issued by GOCPYVS do require matching funds to ensure the police agency has a stake in the successful operation of the grant. All grants are discretionary on the part of the police agency. Police agencies determine which grants to apply for based on their communities needs and the priorities of the agency. Never before has a law enforcement agency been required to apply for a grant, use funds budgeted for other priorities to match the grant, and distribute money in the form of vouchers, worth \$250, to a limited number of drivers.

House Bill 1029 creates several problems for the MDSP. The bill requires the MDSP to implement the grant at three barracks to start and after one year take the program statewide. \$20,000 only pays for 80 vouchers. In three barracks that’s not enough for even one voucher per trooper. That means the MDSP has to commit a substantial amount of general funds to make the program work. MSP would have to decide which program funding needs to be cut or underfunded so that a mandated grant program can proceed.

Additionally, the legislation places a huge burden on the Trooper required to possess and distribute these vouchers. The bill does not provide details or guidance on to whom the vouchers are to be issued. If a Trooper gives a voucher to one person but not another, the officer will be accused of favoritism, racial profiling, or discrimination. MDSP believes everyone should be treated fairly. But this mandated program puts Troopers in an untenable position of having to decide who gets a voucher worth \$250. MDSP can expect drivers to stop in the barrack and ask for vouchers once the word gets out.

State of Maryland
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POSITION ON PROPOSED LEGISLATION

The legislative mandate would also require MSP to account for every voucher because they are like cash. Every traffic stop where a voucher is issued will have to be documented and the information as to who received a voucher recorded. There is no mechanism to determine if a driver has received multiple vouchers for the same violation.

Local law enforcement agencies have a better sense of the needs of their communities. If the grant is designed to help low income driver's who need assistance with repairs, let the local law enforcement agencies who know their neighborhoods decide if they want to participate and where the grant should be targeted. Most importantly no police agency should be forced to use their general funds to match a grant of this type. Today's budgets are tight enough. Grants for this type of program should be discretionary and left to the local police agencies who work within their communities.

For these reasons, the Maryland Department of State Police urges the Committee to give House Bill 1029 an unfavorable report.