



COMMISSION ON AGING

January 31, 2024

Judicial Proceedings Committee
Senator William C. Smith, Jr., Chair
Senator Jeff Waldstreicher, Vice Chair
2 East Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

SUPPORT: SB 373 Criminal Law – Theft – Mail and Mail Depository Key

Dear Senator Smith:

I am writing on behalf of the Montgomery County Commission on Aging in support of SB0373. The Commission is authorized by the Older Americans Act, P.L. 116 131, and was established by Montgomery County in 1974 to advise County government on the needs, interests and issues of older adult residents, and to advocate on their behalf at the local, state and national levels.

SB0373 introduces a crucial addition to state law by creating a criminal penalty for mail theft, a provision that was previously absent. It further delineates escalating penalties based on the severity of the offense, such as the amount of mail stolen, theft from elderly or vulnerable citizens, theft of mail containing personal identifying information, and assault of mail carriers.

Montgomery County boasts a diverse and engaged older adult population, with residents 60+ constituting 22 percent of the County's total population, with a projected growth to 35 percent by 2040. Some older individuals cannot get to the post office and may rely more on the blue boxes or their own mailboxes than the rest of the population. Unfortunately, mail theft and assaults on postal carriers have become pressing concerns statewide. Instances include direct theft from blue mailboxes and armed robberies of mail carriers for their "arrow keys," a tool used to access mail receptacles in neighborhoods.

The Montgomery County Commission on Aging views the changes proposed by SB0373 as a critical step in deterring and penalizing the rising frequency of these crimes. Here are some alarming incidents that underscore the urgency of addressing this issue:

- In January 2023, a man in Silver Spring was accused of robbing a U.S. Postal carrier at gun point.¹

¹ <https://www.wusa9.com/article/news/local/maryland/man-charged-armed-robbery-mail-carrier-montgomery-county/65-d9739bb9-81f4-4007-8894-355a11610533>

Department of Health and Human Services

401 Hungerford Drive, 4th Floor, Rockville, Maryland, 20850 240-777-1120, FAX 240-777-1436

www.montgomerycountymd.gov/hhs

- In April 2023, a postal worker in Chevy Chase threatened with a gun and robbed of USPS property.²

A January 2024 AARP article cites a 2023 Gallup poll³ revealing more than twice as many Americans fear being the victim of a scam or having their identity stolen than fear being murdered. By making mail theft a state crime, including the abuse of "Personal Identifying Information," and imposing the extra sanctions on a victim who is an "elderly person" (age 68+) or a "vulnerable adult" will have special impact on older adults by reducing the stress and fear of being a victim of these crimes. Enacting SB0373 provides a swifter avenue for the State's Attorney's to pursue these egregious cases, alleviating federal resources for more complex cases.

In conclusion, the Montgomery County Commission on Aging supports SB0373, recognizing it as a vital measure to strengthen state laws against mail theft, assault of mail carriers, mail identity theft, and theft from elderly or vulnerable citizens. The Commission urges your support of SB0373, considering it a crucial step in enhancing the safety of USPS workers and vulnerable elderly residents. Tackling this escalating problem today will contribute to preserving the integrity of one of our most longstanding, dependable, and valued public services.

Sincerely,

David Engel

David Engel, Chair

Montgomery County Commission on Aging

² <https://patch.com/maryland/bethesda-chevyCHASE/usps-letter-carrier-robbed-gunpoint-chevy-chase-officials>

³ <https://news.gallup.com/poll/544643/scams-relatively-common-anxiety-inducing-americans.aspx?version=print>