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Date: January 23, 2025

Re: SB 0292: Motor Vehicles - Secondary Enforcement and Admissibility of Evidence

Position: **SUPPORT**

To: The Maryland Judicial Proceedings Committee

Distinguished Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of SB 292, Motor Vehicles - Secondary Enforcement and Admissibility of Evidence. This bill would require officers to document all reasons for traffic stops and limit enforcement of certain non-safety-related traffic violations to secondary actions. My name is Ed Jackson, and as someone who has dedicated over 30 years to public safety, including my time as Chief of Police in Annapolis and a 21-year career with the Baltimore Police Department, I believe this bill is a vital step toward improving law enforcement effectiveness and strengthening trust with the communities we serve.

LEAP is a nonprofit group of police, prosecutors, judges, and other criminal justice professionals who speak from firsthand experience serving in the justice system. Our mission is to make communities safer by focusing law enforcement resources on the greatest threats to public safety and working toward healing police-community relations.

Throughout my career, I have witnessed just how essential trust is to effective policing. Every interaction we have with the public carries weight, influencing whether individuals feel safe reporting crimes or cooperating with investigations. This trust is too often disrupted by unnecessary and harmful interactions, particularly with traffic stops that are not related to safety, typically for infractions like expired registrations or minor equipment issues.

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These sorts of stops disproportionately impact communities of color. [Studies](#) consistently show that Black drivers are more likely to be pulled over and cited for these violations and to be searched during stops, even though they are no more likely than white drivers to be carrying contraband. For many, the experience is not only frustrating, but often frightening. When individuals feel targeted, they lose trust in the police, which makes it harder for us to do our jobs effectively. Distrust in law enforcement leads to fewer reports of crimes, fewer cooperative witnesses, and a breakdown in the relationships that are vital to keeping communities safe.

Non-safety-related traffic stops also burden law enforcement and the broader justice system in ways that are hard to ignore. These stops often result in citations for minor infractions, diverting attention away from addressing serious crimes and road safety concerns. The vast majority of these stops yield no contraband, weapons, or evidence of criminal activity, calling into question their effectiveness as a policing tool. This cycle creates unnecessary strain on court systems, overburdens officers with low-priority enforcement duties, and places additional economic hardships on already marginalized communities.

Fortunately, SB0292 offers a clear solution. By requiring officers to clearly document the reasons for a stop, the bill ensures greater accountability and transparency in policing practices. Moreover, by limiting enforcement of minor, non-safety-related infractions to secondary actions, the legislation allows law enforcement to prioritize serious safety concerns. Together, these measures will strengthen public trust and make policing more efficient and effective.

Evidence from jurisdictions like [Philadelphia](#) and Minnesota, demonstrates that similar policies have led to reductions in racial disparities in traffic stops without compromising safety. For example, after implementing similar measures in Philadelphia, non-safety-related stops for Black drivers decreased by 54%, allowing officers to dedicate more attention to serious traffic violations and other crimes that threaten community safety.

Importantly, SB0292 does not take away essential tools from law enforcement. Officers will still be empowered to stop vehicles for primary offenses that impact public safety, such as reckless driving or DUIs. The documentation requirements of the bill further ensure fairness in traffic enforcement, providing communities with the data needed to foster accountability and trust.

As a law enforcement professional, I know that unnecessary traffic stops and low-level enforcement actions do not make our communities safer. Instead, they divert valuable resources, damage community trust, and increase the risk of harm for both officers and civilians. By passing SB0292, Maryland can lead the way in demonstrating that transparency, fairness, and public safety can go hand in hand.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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Respectfully,

Chief Edward C. Jackson

Chief of Police

Annapolis Police Department

Speaker, The Law Enforcement Action Partnership