

House Bill 635

Motor Vehicles- Secondary Enforcement and Admissibility of Evidence

Position: **OPPOSE**

To: Judiciary Committee

Date: Feb. 10, 2025

From: Chip Bertino, Worcester County Commissioner

Good afternoon Chair Clippinger and committee members. I am writing to oppose HB 635. This bill would further restrict law enforcement officials throughout the state from doing their jobs in order to advance progressive objectives aimed at condemning police officers as a societal threat.

House Bill 635 reclassifies multiple primary traffic violations, for which police can pull a driver over, to secondary violations. Included in this category are driving without functioning headlights or taillights, driving without a mirror, window tint, throwing litter from a car and failure to illuminate a license plate among other violations. Under the bill, citations can be written for these violations but only as secondary offenses. Officers would be required to stop vehicles for other, primary, reasons.

So, who is responsible if a car without functioning headlights, ignored by police, causes a fatal accident? How about a situation where a road officer makes a traffic stop and is unable to see inside the vehicle because the windows are too dark? What if the driver, hidden behind very dark tinted windows, has a weapon aimed at the officer walking alongside the vehicle? And, what if, heaven forbid, the officer is shot as a result? Will the supporters of this bill, should it become law, be held accountable?

This is yet another attempt by Annapolis lawmakers to take away law enforcement tools necessary to protect our communities.

The mindset of individuals attempting to water down the effectiveness of sworn officers working to protect and serve our communities is as frustrating to law enforcement as it is dangerous to the citizens they are sworn to serve.

Admittedly law enforcement has a responsibility to labor without malice toward any individual or group. But just as important is the responsibility of citizens to obey the law, a concept that some people fail to appreciate and accept.

I urge you to oppose HB 635. Thank you for your service, your time and your consideration.