



# Montgomery County

## Office of Intergovernmental Relations

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HB 883

DATE: February 19, 2025

SPONSOR: Delegate Wims, *et al.*

ASSIGNED TO: Judiciary Committee

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

POSITION: SUPPORT

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### **Criminal Law – Motor Vehicle or Vessel – Criminal Negligence**

House Bill 883 would prohibit a person from driving, operating, or controlling a motor vehicle or vessel in a criminally negligent manner. Montgomery County supports the bill.

In October of 2023, Montgomery County Police Sgt. Patrick Kepp was seriously injured after being struck on I-270 by a reckless and aggressive driver who had repeatedly engaged in dangerous driving, including incidents where he operated his car at speeds well over 130 miles per hour. The Montgomery County Department of Police was familiar with the teenage driver. He had been issued multiple citations, but he continued to engage in aggressive driving. In the early morning hours of October 18<sup>th</sup>, after receiving another report of dangerous driving by the notorious teen, Sgt. Kepp responded to the incident by driving to the section of I-270 where the car had been headed and deployed stop sticks in the road to deflate the driver's tires. Instead of the driver slowing down to prevent a crash, he drove into Sgt. Kepp causing the police officer to sustain crushing injuries to his legs resulting in necessary amputation. The driver has been charged with attempted first-degree murder, first-degree assault, and causing life-threatening injuries to Sgt. Kepp.

The vehicle that struck Sgt. Kepp was being intentionally driven in a negligent manner. Because current law addresses the criminally negligent operation of a motor vehicle that *results* in serious bodily injury or death – and not criminally negligent conduct involving the operation of a vehicle *before* someone is seriously injured or dies – House Bill 883 creates a criminal law charge that would act as a deterrent to dangerous and aggressive driving. The driver's conduct would have to rise to the level of criminal negligence, but more important, the offender would be required to appear before a judge to address the behavior in a substantive manner. In doing so, the legislation aims to stop someone from engaging in criminally negligent conduct *before* they harm or kill someone.

Montgomery County urges the Committee to adopt a favorable report on House Bill 883.