

Testimony in Support of HB 635: Motor Vehicles-Secondary Enforcement and Admissibility of Evidence

To The House Judiciary Committee

Greetings

My name is Robert Stubblefield and I am a lifelong resident of Maryland, specifically Montgomery County. I am also a lay minister and activist-organizer with groups such as DSA, the Bethesda African Cemetery Coalition, YPP and now the Black United Front of Montgomery County to write in support of the HB 635: Motor Vehicles-Secondary Enforcement and Admissibility of Evidence which would prohibit police from pulling people over for minor, non safety related reasons.

I support this bill because often times minor traffic stops have been used as an unjustifiable pretext to search for drugs. Often times it is used to target Black, Indigenous and Hispanic populations which not only makes it harder to own and operate a vehicle, but it also serves to increase police presence and encounters between black and brown communities. For instance, per current police data police are more likely to stop black and brown drivers 5-10% higher during the day instead of the night because the night time makes it harder to identify one's race and ethnicity. Some people, from Councilmembers to the masses have had numerous experiences of being racially profiled during a minor traffic violation with the only saving grace that it didn't escalate into a violent encounter. This also ties into the data that shows during this traffic stops police are more likely to use force when the driver is black or brown. Not only does this cause a nuisance but it doesn't improve public safety at all.

To be clear, while this act is necessary in the short term, it does not address the long standing issue of policing in the state of Maryland. 2023 and 2024 showed that nationwide were the most deadliest years for Black, Indigenous and Latine People in terms of police violence and Maryland was no exception. We are trying to reckon with our own ugly history of police terrorism here. We must ultimately break down the notion that police abolition is too radical especially in these times. We must accept the fact that police abolition already exists in parts of Maryland, all those of us at the Groundroots are asking for is that police abolition be applied equally and equitably.