



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES

ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Chairman Clippinger, Vice Chair Bartlett, and Members of the Committee,

I am Delegate N. Scott Phillips from the 10th Legislative District, and I am honored to appear before you today to request a favorable report on HB0635, the Secondary Enforcement and Admissibility of Evidence, also known as the Safer Stops bill. This bill seeks to reclassify certain non-dangerous, mostly administrative vehicle violations, such as expired registration, as secondary offenses. At its core, HB0635 is about fairness, safety, and common sense. It represents a critical step toward reducing racial disparities in traffic enforcement, enhancing public safety, and strengthening the trust between law enforcement and the communities they serve.

Our proposal is not based on theory alone—it is informed by data, research, and successful legislative models from across the country. In Virginia, legislation enacted in 2020 reclassified specific minor traffic infractions—such as equipment violations and issues like tinted windows—as secondary offenses. This reform has led to a reduction in unnecessary traffic stops without compromising road safety, allowing law enforcement to focus on genuine public safety threats.

Similarly, Philadelphia's "Driving Equality" bill has demonstrated the positive impact of reclassifying minor traffic violations as secondary offenses. This policy change has significantly reduced unnecessary police stops while maintaining public safety and building trust between law enforcement and communities, particularly communities of color disproportionately affected by pretextual stops.

The VERA Institute's research reinforces these findings, showing that traffic enforcement can be both safer and more effective when focused on behaviors that genuinely threaten public safety. Their data highlights the limited safety benefits of stops for minor infractions and the potential for these encounters to escalate unnecessarily, often with tragic consequences.

Here in Maryland, the current policy allows infractions like expired registration or broken taillights to be considered primary offenses, giving law enforcement broad discretion to stop vehicles for these minor issues. This discretion has disproportionately impacted communities of color. In 2023 alone, Baltimore County Police conducted 17,505 traffic stops for expired or missing registration, with 66% involving Black drivers, despite Black residents comprising just 31% of the population according to the last census. This stark disparity demands our attention and action.

Today, you will hear from both supporters and opponents of this legislation. Supporters are deeply concerned about the significant racial disparities that persist in traffic stops. Opponents may argue that such stops can lead to the discovery of other legal infractions, such as guns and drugs. While I understand law enforcement's perspective, I ask you to consider this: Should we accept 397,178 non-moving violation stops in Maryland, with a disproportionate impact on people of color, when less than 1% of these stops result in an arrest?

Attached to this testimony, you will find a FAQ from the VERA Institute and data from the Maryland Race-Based Traffic Stop Dashboard to provide further context. HB0635 builds on the progress made with HB1071, which limited the use of the "smell of cannabis" as probable cause for searches. By reducing unnecessary stops for administrative violations, we not only address racial disparities but also enhance officer safety. Traffic incidents remain one of the leading causes of injury and death among officers. Focusing law enforcement efforts on serious threats reduces these risks and helps protect those who protect us.

As we prepared for this hearing, I also want my colleagues to know we have been listening to some of the criticism this legislation has garnered. As a result we are proposing a number of amendments. These amendments include:

- a) Removing administrative discipline language from any new secondary enforcement provisions
- b) Keeping the discarding of debris as a primary enforcement provision
- c) Making enforcement of non-working headlights and tail lights contingent upon both a left side and right side headlight or tail light outage (both lights must be out) and only enforceable at night or under weather conditions where lights would be required.
- d) Registration infractions will be a secondary infraction with the exception of a vehicle that has no registration
- e) Add a study to review alternative means to enforce non-safety related stops using LPR and digital ticketing enforcement using technology with a focus on registration related
- f) Remove turn signal violations as a secondary stop

I urge you to give HB0635 a favorable report. This legislation is a vital step toward creating a more equitable, effective, and safer system of traffic enforcement in Maryland. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

N. Scott Phillips

Agency

Stop Reason

Year

Race-Based Traffic Stop Data Dashboard

All

Data obtained from local law enforcement agencies

All

2023

2023

Reset all filters

Total Agencies
1

Total Stops
40,388

Total Searches
1,746

Total Arrests
548

% White
27.3%

% Black
59.3%

% Male
59.1%

Average Age
38

Agency Traffic Stop Breakdown

Agency	Total Stops	Searches	Arrests	Search Percent	Arrest Percent
Aberdeen Police Department	1,242	12	5	0.97%	0.40%
Allegany County Sheriff's Office	1,187	33	13	2.78%	1.10%
Annapolis Police Department	1,418	35	34	2.47%	2.40%
Anne Arundel Community College Public Safety Police	42	0	0	0.00%	0.00%
Anne Arundel County Police	41,990	1,191	242	2.84%	0.58%
Anne Arundel County Sheriff's Office	3	0	0	0.00%	0.00%
Baltimore City School Police	64	0	0	0.00%	0.00%
Baltimore County Police Department	40,388	1,746	548	4.32%	1.36%
Baltimore Environmental Police	90	1	1	1.11%	1.11%
Baltimore Police Department	25,156	596	261	2.37%	1.04%
Baltimore Sheriff's Office	3	0	0	0.00%	0.00%
Bel Air Police Department	1,008	2	1	0.20%	0.10%
Berlin Police Department	519	4	4	0.77%	0.77%
Berwyn Heights Police Department	228	1	0	0.44%	0.00%
Bladensburg Police Department	721	20	9	2.77%	1.25%
Total	482,299	11,930	4,110	2.47%	0.85%

Stop

Stop Reason	Total Stops	Percent of Traffic Stops	Search Percent	Arrest Percent
13 (Registration)	17,505	43.34%	5.23%	0.64%
16 (License Violations)	955	2.36%	5.55%	2.30%
21.11 (Misc. Rules)	772	1.91%	4.15%	0.91%
21.13 (Registration)	28	0.07%	10.71%	10.71%
21.14 (Toll Violations)	16	0.04%	12.50%	0.00%
21.2 (Signs, Signals, and Markings)	3,490	8.64%	2.52%	1.55%
21.3 (Right side of road, Passing)	1,277	3.16%	5.32%	4.07%
21.4 (Right of Way)	380	0.94%	3.16%	2.11%
21.5 (Pedestrian Rules and Rights)	159	0.39%	0.00%	0.00%
21.6 (Turning, Signals, and Stopping)	368	0.91%	3.80%	1.09%
21.7 (Special Stops)	1,993	4.93%	1.15%	0.45%
21.8 (Moving Violations)	2,925	7.24%	2.26%	1.44%
21.9 (Reckless Driving or Fleeing)	532	1.32%	29.51%	25.00%
22 (Equipment)	4,857	12.03%	3.64%	1.03%
99 (All other stops)	5,131	12.70%	2.65%	1.01%
Total	40,388	100.00%	4.32%	1.36%

Number of Stops by Month

Driver County of Residence
Race/Ethnicity of Driver

Gender of Driver

Driver Vehicle Registration

Type of Search
Conducted by
Race/Ethnicity

Race

All



Gender

All

Search Conducted

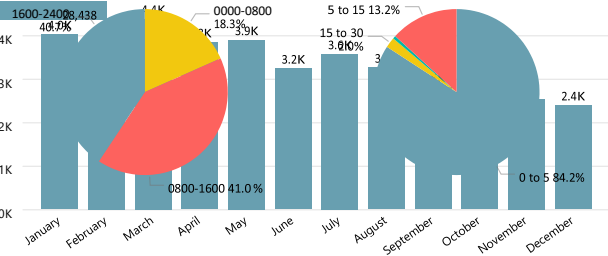
All

Stop Outcome

All

Baltimore	16,000
Baltimore City	7,382
Harford	658
Anne Arundel	621
Howard	603
Prince George's	346
Carroll	213
Montgomery	213
Calvert	134
Frederick	54
Charles	33
Cecil	30
Washington	29
Allegany	26
Queen Anne's	13
Kent	10
St. Mary's	9
Wicomico	9
Caroline	7
Dorchester	5
Worcester	5
Talbot	4
Garrett	2
Somerset	2

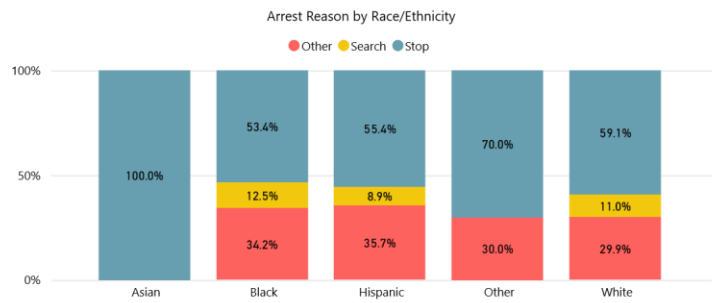
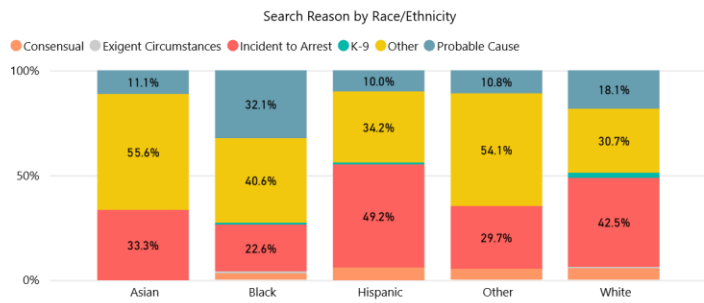
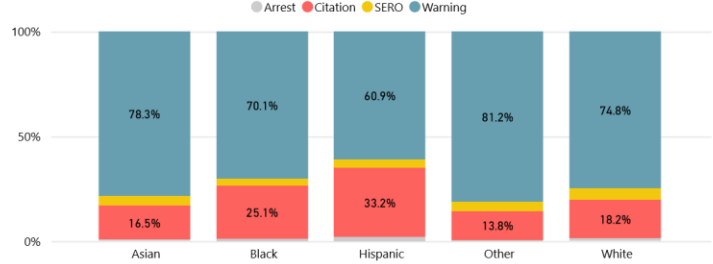
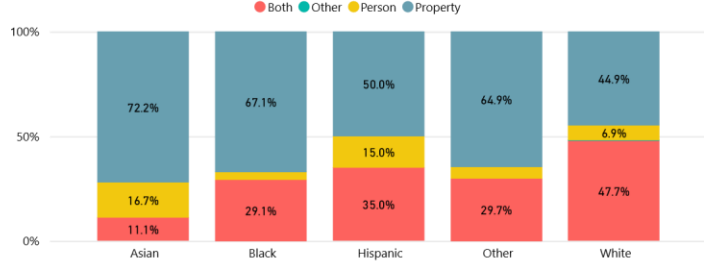
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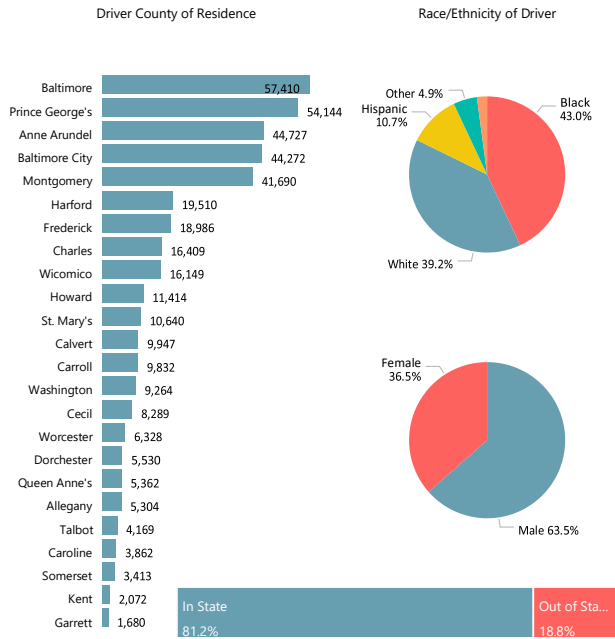
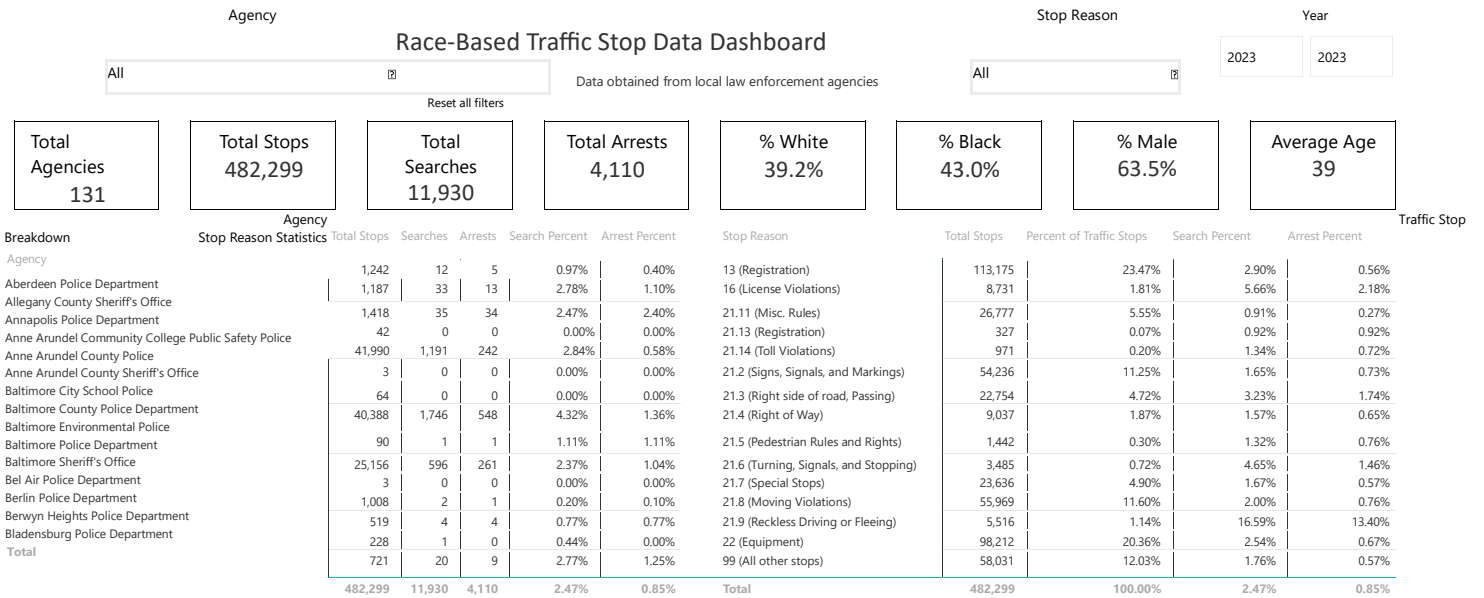


Time of Stop

Length of Stop (minutes)

Traffic Stop Outcome by Race/Ethnicity





Baltimore

57,410

Prince George's

54,144

Anne Arundel

44,727

Baltimore City

44,772

Montgomery

41,690

Harford

19,510

Frederick

18,986

Charles

16,409

Wicomico

16,149

Howard

11,414

St. Mary's

10,640

Calvert

9,947

Carroll

9,832

Washington

9,264

Cecil

8,289

Worcester

6,328

Dorchester

5,530

Queen Anne's

5,362

Allegany

5,304

Talbot

4,169

Caroline

3,862

Somerset

3,413

Kent

2,072

Garrett

1,680

Other 4.9%

Hispanic 10.7%

Black 43.0%

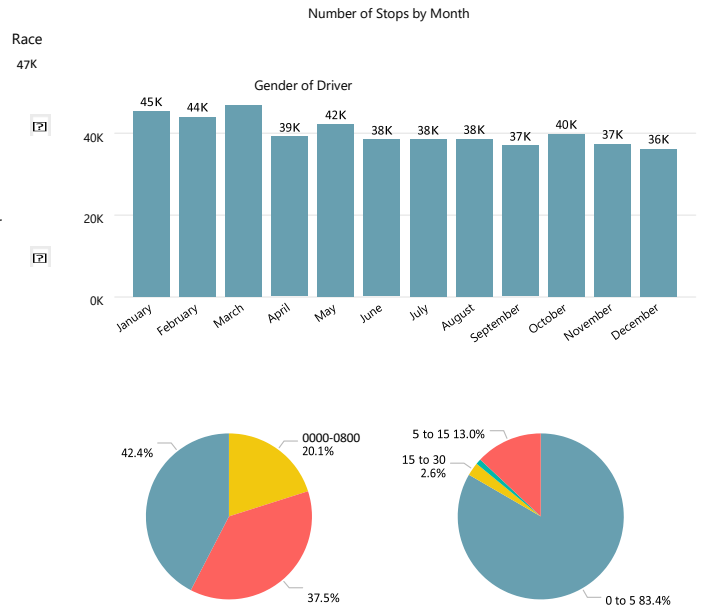
White 39.2%

Female 36.5%

Male 63.5%

In State 81.2%

Out of State 18.8%



All

47K

[?] [?]

40K

20K

0K

January

February

March

April

May

June

July

August

September

October

November

December

45K

44K

39K

42K

38K

38K

38K

37K

40K

37K

36K

42.4%

20.1%

37.5%

0000-0800

5 to 15 13.0%

15 to 30 2.6%

0 to 5 83.4%

All

Time of Stop

Length of Stop (minutes)

1600-2400

Stop Outcome

All

