

January 20, 2026

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Testimony before the Senate Judiciary Proceedings Committee in support of SB 55 - Motor Vehicles – Police Stops – Secondary Enforcement and Excludable Evidence

Dear Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Distinguished Members of the Committee,

My name is Charmin Leon, and I served nearly 13 years at the Cleveland Division of Police in Ohio. Currently, I am the Director of Law Enforcement Initiatives at the Center for Policing Equity, a research and action organization made up of former law enforcement, academics, and community engagement specialists that uses scientific research to identify and reduce racial disparities in policing.

Senate Bill 55 is an important step towards preserving officer resources and morale, addressing equity, and improving traffic safety across the state of Maryland. Passing this bill would bring law enforcement in Maryland in line with evidence-based policing that is the modern standard of our profession, and would better allocate police resources towards practices that actually make our communities safer.

I spent years on patrol, as well as leading the background investigation and recruitment units. During that time, I found that officers who focused on non-safety stops were the least effective at discovering serious crimes and had a negative impact on the morale of other officers who had to pick up their slack. Maryland law enforcement currently expend a significant portion of their capacity on non-safety-related violations. State data show that in 2024, Maryland law enforcement made 280,202 stops for equipment- or registration-related violations, making up over 52% of all traffic stops in the state last year.¹ This is not a good use of limited police resources.

When officers devote so much of their time to these non-safety related stops, it prevents them from focusing on behavior that actually endangers public safety. It is not an effective crime fighting strategy and does not improve road safety. Studies show that these stops rarely uncover guns or other contraband.²

¹ *Race-Based Traffic Stop Data Dashboard* (Year: 2024; Stop Reason: 13. Registration and 22. Equipment). Maryland Governor's Office of Crime Prevention and Policy.

<https://gocpp.maryland.gov/data-dashboards/traffic-stop-data-dashboard/>.

² Baumgartner, F. R., Epp, D. A., & Shoub, K. (2018). *Suspect citizens: What 20 million traffic stops tell us about policing and race*. Cambridge University Press. pp. 54, 230.

Deprioritizing low-level enforcement however, *has* proven successful in improving road safety and enhancing racial equity. When Fayetteville, North Carolina’s police department shifted their enforcement priorities, safety-related stops increased from 30% to 80% of all traffic stops, traffic fatalities dropped by 28%, racial disparities were significantly reduced, and reported crime rates remained the same.³ When Newington, Connecticut shifted their enforcement focus, DUI arrest rates increased by 250%.⁴ And in Philadelphia, law enforcement were able to recover more guns from traffic stops after they limited non-safety related stops.⁵

Finally and importantly, this bill would improve racial disparities in Maryland policing. Data from the Governor’s Office of Crime Prevention and Policy show that in 2024, Black drivers were subjected to almost 43% of all vehicle traffic stops and over 47% of all searches at traffic stops, despite only making up less than 32% of the state’s population.⁶ These policing activities are—at best—traumatic for Black community members and undermine the public’s confidence in the law enforcement profession, especially when initiated for violations that have next to no bearing on road safety.

SB 55 is a proven, common-sense solution to the issues of road safety, racial equity, and officer morale that public safety professionals in Maryland face every day and Center for Policing Equity urges you to issue a favorable report.

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³ Fliss, M. D., Baumgartner, F., Delamater, P., Marshall, S., Poole, C., & Robinson, W. (2020). Re-prioritizing traffic stops to reduce motor vehicle crash outcomes and racial disparities. *Injury Epidemiology*, 7(1), 3.

<https://doi.org/10.1186/s40621-019-0227-6>

⁴ Condon, T. (2022, January 31). After poor start, CT anti-racial profiling effort is making progress. *Hartford Courant*.

⁵ Monroe, H. (2023, March 3). New Philly law takes weapons off the streets, data shows. *CBS News Philadelphia*. <https://www.cbsnews.com/philadelphia/news/new-philly-law-takes-weapons-off-the-streets-data-shows/>

⁶ *Race-Based Traffic Stop Data Dashboard* (Year: 2024; Search Conducted: Yes).; Quickfacts: Maryland (2024). United States Census Bureau. <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/MD/PST045224>.