

# **SB55 Motor Vehicles**

Uploaded by: Anthony Brown

Position: FAV

**CAROLYN A. QUATTROCKI**  
*Chief Deputy Attorney General*

**LEONARD J. HOWIE III**  
*Deputy Attorney General*

**CARRIE J. WILLIAMS**  
*Deputy Attorney General*

**SHARON S. MERRIWEATHER**  
*Deputy Attorney General*

**ZENITA WICKHAM HURLEY**  
*Deputy Attorney General*



**PETER V. BERNS**  
*General Counsel*

**CHRISTIAN E. BARRERA**  
*Chief of Staff*

**STATE OF MARYLAND**  
**OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL**

**ANTHONY G. BROWN**  
*Attorney General*

January 20, 2025

The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr.  
Chairman, Judicial Proceedings Committee  
2 East, Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

*Re: Senate Bill 55 - Motor Vehicles – Police Stops-Secondary Enforcement and Excludable Evidence (SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS)*

Dear Chair Smith:

The Office of the Attorney General (OAG) supports Senate Bill 55 - Motor Vehicles – Traffic Stops - Secondary Enforcement and Excludable Evidence with amendments.

**Background**

Traffic stops can be dangerous for law enforcement and citizens alike. From the side of law enforcement, an alarming number of officers have been injured and killed when they or their vehicles are struck during a traffic stop. According to the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund, between 2014-2023, 150 officers were killed by being struck by a vehicle and 292 officers were killed in automobile crashes.<sup>1</sup> A U.S. Department of Transportation study found that traffic-related incidents, including vehicle crashes, are one of the leading causes of death for law enforcement officers, with 39% of law enforcement officers killed in the line of duty killed in traffic-related incidents.<sup>2</sup> According to the FBI, motor vehicle accidents were the leading cause of accidental officer deaths in 2024.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://nleomf.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Causes-of-Law-Enforcement-Deaths-2014-2023.pdf> and <https://nleomf.org/memorial/facts-figures/officer-fatality-data/causes-of-lawenforcement-deaths/>.

<sup>2</sup> <https://news.maryland.gov/msp/2022/09/30/maryland-state-police-reminding-motorists-moveover-law-expands-to-all-vehicles-beginning-oct-1/>.

<sup>3</sup> <https://le.fbi.gov/cjis-division/cjis-link/statistics-on-law-enforcement-officer-deaths-in-the-lineof-duty-from-january-through-august-2024#:~:text=Accidental%20law%20enforcement%20deaths%20increased,motor%20vehicle%20acciden>

Traffic stops can be similarly dangerous for the motoring public. Far too many people, especially minorities, have been killed or injured by police during traffic stops. These include high-profile cases, such as Daunte Wright, Tyre Nichols, and Philando Castile, but also too many that we have not heard about. A Stanford University nationwide analysis of traffic stops between 2011-2016 found that police pull over 20 million motorists a year, amounting to a staggering 50,000 traffic stops per day.<sup>4</sup> A 2021 investigation by the New York Times revealed that over a five-year period, 400 drivers or passengers were killed by police during traffic stops, not counting those who were armed or under pursuit for a violent crime.<sup>5</sup>

There are undeniable racial disparities in traffic stops. Stanford’s data showed that officers stopped Black drivers at higher rates than White drivers. Once stopped, Stanford found that in nearly every jurisdiction studied, officers searched Black and Hispanic drivers more often than White drivers. A study by the Vera Institute of Justice looked at traffic stops in Suffolk County, Massachusetts, from 2010-2019, and found that police there pulled over Black drivers at 2.3 times the rate of White drivers for non-traffic-safety reasons.<sup>6</sup>

When law enforcement makes traffic stops for purely non-safety reasons, the risk of the traffic stop often is not worth the reward. The Vera Institute study noted that many jurisdictions, including Virginia, Oregon, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, Seattle, Mecklenburg County (North Carolina), and Berkeley (California), have recently limited police stops for minor infractions, dramatically lowering the proportion of traffic stops for non-safety reasons. For example, in Los Angeles, after the policy took effect, stops for non-moving violations went from 21% of all stops to 12% of all stops.<sup>7</sup>

Reducing the number of non-safety related traffic stops and the racial disparity they foster is an important goal, which is why I support Senate Bill 55. Several amendments are necessary, however, to strike the appropriate balance with public safety. In a civil society, anyone wishing to drive must follow the rules of the road. This includes having vehicles tagged, properly registered, and insured, as well as having the vehicle in a safe, working condition.

### **Amendment #1**

Senate Bill 55 makes driving with an unpaid registration a secondary offense. Vehicles with long-standing unpaid registration are seldom insured, so police must be able to keep those vehicles off the roadway. This section should be removed from the bill.<sup>8</sup>

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ts%20(17).

<sup>4</sup> <https://openpolicing.stanford.edu/findings/>.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/31/us/police-killings-traffic-stops-takeaways.html>.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.vera.org/publications/analysis-of-racial-disparities-police-traffic-stops-suffolk-county-ma>.

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2022-11-14/minor-traffic-stops-plummet-in-monthsafter-lapd-policy-change>.

<sup>8</sup> This is the approach taken by Philadelphia in the 2022 “Achieving Driving Equality Act” which made eight traffic violations secondary violations, including having an unregistered vehicle if the vehicle had been properly registered within the prior 60 days. *See*

## **Amendment #2**

Currently, traffic stops are the main enforcement mechanism for compliance with the Maryland Vehicle Administration's (MVA) administrative and safety-related repair requirements for vehicles. For instance, if we remove the ability to pull over a vehicle with only one working headlight, there is no way to enforce the requirement that cars on Maryland's roadways have two working headlights.

For secondary offenses, the bill should create a procedure by which law enforcement who observe a violation would contact the MVA and have the MVA issue repair orders through the mail. If a repair order is ignored, the MVA could issue a citation and ultimately suspend a driver's license and vehicle registration until the issues are addressed.

Relatedly, law enforcement officers cannot ignore multiple violations of our transportation laws. While a single secondary violation may not be a safety issue, multiple violations signal a driver who is unwilling to comply with rules of the road. Our law enforcement officers must be able to make traffic stops to keep the community safe. The bill should be amended to allow for a traffic stop if an officer observes more than one secondary violation.

## **Amendment #3**

Senate Bill 55 amends § 2-109 of the Criminal Procedure Article to require an officer to state "*all* reasons for a traffic stop" in any "police report" from that stop. Often, especially in long-term investigations, such as the ones handled by the OAG's Organized Crime Unit, officers conduct traffic stops based not only on a safety violation but also because they have information from victims and witnesses identifying the driver as a suspect in a violent crime. It would endanger officers, victims, and witnesses if the police always had to tell the suspect every single reason for a traffic stop. Senate Bill 55 should be amended to say that an officer must tell the driver only every traffic violation that formed the basis for the traffic stop.

## **Amendment #4**

Under current law, while the failure of an officer to identify themselves, their agency, their identification number, and the reason for the traffic stop may be grounds for internal disciplinary action, it cannot be grounds to suppress evidence found during the stop. This bill states that failing to make those identifications *may* be grounds to suppress any evidence recovered during the stop. Not only does this risk excluding guns or other evidence of violent crimes based on a minor violation, Senate Bill 55 fails to identify any guidelines for how courts should determine when this evidence should be excluded. This extreme sanction lacking in parameters should be removed from the bill.

## **Amendment #5**

Finally, Section 3 includes a retroactivity provision applicable only to Section 2 of the bill. While the purpose of this retroactivity provision is not entirely clear, we are concerned that the

The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr.

Re: *Senate Bill 55 - Motor Vehicles – Police Stops-Secondary Enforcement and Excludable Evidence*  
(SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS)

January 20, 2026

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provision might be interpreted to establish that stops that were valid stops for primary infractions at the time an officer conducted them are now retroactively made invalid secondary-infraction stops, and the consequences of such a determination are undefined. For that reason, we urge that this provision be clarified or removed.

We applaud Senate Bill 55 for seeking to limit non-safety related traffic stops and reduce racial disparities in Maryland's criminal justice system. The Office of the Attorney General supports Senate Bill 55 with the above-described amendments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "AG Brown". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Anthony G. Brown

**2026 Testimony on SB 55 FAV Cichowski.pdf**

Uploaded by: Carol Cichowski

Position: FAV

**Senate Bill 55**  
**Motor Vehicles-Police Stops-Secondary Enforcement and Excludable Evidence**  
**Judicial Proceedings Committee – January 20, 2026**  
**FAVORABLE**

**Thank you for this opportunity to submit written testimony in support of Senate Bill 55.** I am a long-time resident of Montgomery County who is concerned about the troubling racial disparities in traffic stops and the impact on Black drivers who are being stopped for minor infractions that do not result in other findings of wrongdoing.

**I support this bill because it will reduce unnecessary police encounters for minor traffic offenses that create opportunities for unjust outcomes at the hands of police.** The bill would establish limitations on traffic stops for minor non-moving and low-level traffic infractions that are to be distinguished from “collision contributing violations” that involve driving in a dangerous or unsafe manner. The bill takes an approach already implemented in a variety of jurisdictions.<sup>1</sup>

**Setting limits on traffic stops will reduce racial disparities and community trauma, improve community policing relationships, and promote policing efficiency and safety for all by allowing police to focus on high priority safety strategies.**

Racial profiling by law enforcement on American roads is a nation-wide problem that has been well documented. Black drivers are more likely than White drivers to be pulled over by police and Black and Latinx are significantly more likely to be searched. **For Black individuals, the disproportionate impact on them has turned driving, an ordinary American activity, into an experience fraught with discomfort, trauma, if not danger and risk.** Notably, national data show disproportionately higher racial disparities for drivers of color than for White drivers for stops for minor violations as compared to collision contributing violations.<sup>2</sup> It appears that no person of color is safe from this discriminatory treatment regardless of age, gender, type of car, or compliance with the law.

A stop can be traumatizing for Black individuals who already share collective trauma from the long history of police violence against the Black community in our country. There is a growing body of research that tells us the persistent exposure to police is linked to higher levels of stress and anxiety and that **policing that is more aggressive or intrusive can have deleterious effects on the mental health and well-being of**

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<sup>1</sup> Katie Blum and Jill Paperno, “Stop the Stops: The Disparate Use and Impact of Police Pretext Stops on Individuals and Communities of Color, A Preliminary Report,” Empire Justice Center (January 2023), p. 58-62, <https://empirejustice.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Stop-the-Stops-Empire-Justice-Centers-Preliminary-Report-on-Racial-Disparities-in-Pretext-Stops.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Blum (2023), p. 12-16; Emma Pierson, Camelia Simoiu, Jan Overgoor, et al., “A Large-scale analysis of racial disparities in police stops across the United States,” Nature Human Behavior, Vol. 4 (July 2020), p. 736-745, <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41562-020-0858-1>

**individuals** and communities.<sup>3</sup> Stops often involve language that is insulting, dehumanizing, humiliating, or abusive. However, even politeness on the part of police does not make an unjustified stop acceptable to someone who feels they have been singled out because of their race. Unnecessary and biased low-level stops have been shown to have a particularly damaging effect on adolescent youth of color.<sup>4</sup>

Stops can also lead to physical, even deadly, confrontations. Since 2017, more than 800 people have been killed after being pulled over in the U.S.<sup>5</sup> America's shameful history of police stops that have resulted in the deaths of Black men has created a visceral fear for people of color—a sense that regardless of how careful one might be, there is a chance that an encounter with police might become volatile and dangerous.

What is particularly problematic is that many of the stops in which people of color are disproportionately impacted are pretextual stops in which the alleged violation is only a pretext for stopping the vehicle to do a search. Even though police can legally do these pretextual stops, the disproportionate impact on Black drivers undermines trust in law enforcement and alienates law-abiding citizens.

**Policing practices like pretextual stops send the message that Black residents are not equal** and full members of the community, worthy of the same protection.

Moreover, the evidence is that they do not make us safer and that resources are better directed elsewhere. A pretextual stop for a minor violation can create a tense, unpredictable situation that can quickly escalate. The minimal number of arrests or items seized as a result of pretextual stops comes at a great cost.<sup>6</sup>

**SB 55 promotes public safety because the approach it takes allows traffic enforcement to focus on the most dangerous driver behavior** — impaired, reckless, distracted, and aggressive driving, and driving affecting pedestrian safety. While police might argue that the bill would limit the capacity of law enforcement, it is time to weigh the benefits of making stops that are not related to dangerous driving and that do not typically result in an arrest for criminal activity against the psychological toll they exact on innocent people, the adverse impact on community trust in policing, and the risk of physical danger to all involved.

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<sup>3</sup> National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, *Reducing Racial Inequality in Crime and Justice: Science, Practice, and Policy*, Washington, DC: The National Academies Press (2023),

p. 162, <https://www.nationalacademies.org/our-work/reducing-racial-inequalities-in-the-criminal-justice-system>

<sup>4</sup> Jill Paperno and Katie Blum, "Safe and Fair Traffic Enforcement: Reducing the Harm While Increasing Public and Road Safety," Empire Justice Center, p. 9, <https://empirejustice.org/wp-content/uploads/Safe-and-Fair-Traffic-Enforcement-Report-5.25.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> According to statistics from the Mapping Police Violence data base. See "Why do so many police traffic stops turn deadly", BBC News, Washington (January 31, 2023), <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-64458041>

<sup>6</sup> Data from different jurisdictions suggest that pretextual stops amount to a needle-in-a-haystack approach to finding contraband. See Sam McCann, "Low-Level Traffic Stops are Ineffective—and Sometimes Deadly. Why are They Still Happening?" Vera News and Stories (March 29, 2023), <https://www.vera.org/news/low-level-traffic-stops-are-ineffective-and-sometimes-deadly-why-are-they-still-happening>

**This bill takes a commonsense step in the right direction toward alleviating the harm caused by unnecessary police interactions with people of color in the state while continuing to support goals relating to improving road safety and eliminating fatalities and severe injuries.**

**For these reasons, I urge a Favorable report on SB 55.**

**Carol Cichowski  
Bethesda, Maryland**

# **SB0055\_Motor\_Vehicles\_Police\_Stops\_Secondary\_Enfor**

Uploaded by: Cecilia Plante

Position: FAV



**TESTIMONY FOR SB0055**  
**Motor Vehicles – Police Stops - Secondary Enforcement and**  
**Excludable Evidence**

**Bill Sponsor:** Senator Sydnor

**Committee:** Judicial Proceedings

**Organization Submitting:** Maryland Legislative Coalition

**Person Submitting:** Cecilia Plante, co-chair

**Position:** FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in favor of SB0055 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. The Maryland Legislative Coalition is an association of activists - individuals and grassroots groups in every district in the state. We are unpaid citizen lobbyists and our Coalition supports well over 30,000 members.

As legislators, the General Assembly is asked to problem solve. Finding a good solution to a pervasive problem is a critical element of serving the people of Maryland.

We have seen video of police stops of people with brown skin for no reason other than the fact that they are brown. It frightens everyone when enforcement is random. This bill strives to put guardrails around the process of police stops to ensure that they are 'for cause'. This is an excellent way to resolve a problem without creating new problems.

The first thing required here is a simple documentation of the reason for the stop on the citation or police report resulting from the stop. Failure to comply with this simple reporting requirement may be grounds for administrative disciplinary action and may serve as the basis for exclusion

of evidence under the exclusionary rule. It also prohibits the officer from preventing a citizen from recording the stop.

Finally, it takes away a lot of the small things that could be used as 'reasons' for the stop, such as littering, non-working headlamps or tail lights unless those reasons are secondary to the main purpose of the stop. Additionally, expired registrations (unless they are more than 4 months expired) can't be used as the main purpose of the stop.

In other words, the stop must be made for a more important reason, such as a moving violation or a suspended or cancelled registration.

We support this bill and recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.

# **CPE Written Testimony SB 55.pdf**

Uploaded by: Charmin Leon

Position: FAV

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.<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *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/>.

<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup> When Newington, Connecticut shifted their enforcement focus, DUI arrest rates increased by 250%.<sup>4</sup> And in Philadelphia, law enforcement were able to recover more guns from traffic stops after they limited non-safety related stops.<sup>5</sup>

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.<sup>6</sup> 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.**

Charmin Leon

[cleon@policingequity.org](mailto:cleon@policingequity.org)

Director of Law Enforcement Initiatives

Center for Policing Equity

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<sup>3</sup> 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>

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

<sup>5</sup> 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/>

<sup>6</sup> *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>.

## **1.20.26. YPP Testimony on SB55. Position\_ Favorabl**

Uploaded by: Danielle Blocker

Position: FAV



Email: [info@ypforprogress.org](mailto:info@ypforprogress.org)

Website: [ypforprogress.org](http://ypforprogress.org)

Socials: [@ypforprogress](https://www.instagram.com/ypforprogress)



**Testimony for Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee  
January 20, 2026  
SB55 - Motor Vehicles - Stops- Secondary Enforcement and Excludable  
Evidence**

**FAVORABLE**

Dear Chair Smith and Members of the Committee:

Young People for Progress (YPP) strongly supports the introduction of SB-55, Motor Vehicles - Secondary Enforcement and Excludable Evidence, which we believe is a necessary step toward creating a more equitable and effective traffic safety system.

The SB-55 bill seeks to reclassify certain minor traffic infractions as secondary offenses. This means that police officers cannot stop drivers solely for these infractions, which include issues like driving with expired registration tags or tinted windows. The bill aims to reduce unnecessary traffic stops that disproportionately impact marginalized communities and divert law enforcement resources from more serious safety concerns.

As an organization deeply rooted in the experiences of young people of color, we are all too familiar with the harms caused by minor traffic stops. These encounters often lead to fear, financial hardship, and in some cases, unnecessary escalation. Unfortunately, the data shows that these stops disproportionately target Black and Brown drivers, exacerbating systemic inequities. From 2018 to 2022 in Montgomery County, Black drivers made up 30% of traffic stops and Latinx drivers 21%, despite comprising only 18% and 19% of the county's population, respectively.<sup>1</sup> These disparities heighten the risk of harm, as interactions with police during traffic stops can escalate unnecessarily, placing drivers—especially people of color—in situations of stress, fear, and even violence.

Moreover, these stops are largely ineffective in addressing public safety. Montgomery County data from 2022 shows that firearms were recovered in less than 0.5% of traffic stops.<sup>2</sup> This demonstrates that focusing on minor infractions, like a broken taillight or expired registration, diverts valuable law enforcement resources from addressing genuinely dangerous violations.

The approach proposed in this bill has been proven to work. For example, Fayetteville, North Carolina, deprioritized minor traffic stops and instead focused on serious safety violations. As a result, they saw a decrease in racial disparities in traffic enforcement without compromising public safety outcomes.<sup>3</sup> This shows that we can adopt smarter, fairer traffic enforcement practices that focus on what truly matters: keeping our roads safe.

By reclassifying certain minor infractions as secondary offenses, this bill ensures that drivers are not stopped for issues that pose no immediate safety threat. It also strengthens

<sup>1</sup> OLO Memorandum Report 2022-12: Analysis of data Montgomery Traffic Violations Dataset, Montgomery County Council. (2022, October 25). [https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/OLO/Resources/Files/2022\\_reports/OLOREport2022-12.pdf](https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/OLO/Resources/Files/2022_reports/OLOREport2022-12.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Discussion: OLO Memorandum Report 2022-21: Analysis of Date Montgomery County Traffic Violations Dataset, Montgomery County Council Transportation & Environment/Public Safety Committees. (2023, February 6). [https://www.youtube.com/live/y0d\\_5\\_FhGxo](https://www.youtube.com/live/y0d_5_FhGxo)

<sup>3</sup> Fliss, M.D., Baumgartner, F., Delamater, P. et al. (2020). Re-prioritizing traffic stops to reduce motor vehicle crash outcomes and racial disparities. *Injury Epidemiology*, 7(3). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40621-019-0227-6>

accountability by requiring officers to document the reasons for each stop and provide identification to drivers, fostering transparency and trust.

Passing this bill is a critical step in addressing the long-standing disparities in our traffic enforcement system. It will help reduce harm to marginalized communities, rebuild trust in law enforcement, and ensure that our state's policies reflect the values of fairness, safety, and equity. Together, we can create a system that works for all Maryland residents.

We respectfully urge the committee to issue a favorable report on SB-55. Thank you for your time and commitment to public safety and equity.

Sincerely,

Danielle Blocker  
Executive Director  
Young People for Progress



**SB55 FAV OPD 2026 Testimony Favorable .docx.pdf**

Uploaded by: Deborah Levi

Position: FAV



**NATASHA DARTIGUE**  
PUBLIC DEFENDER  
**KEITH LOTRIDGE**  
DEPUTY PUBLIC DEFENDER  
**HANNIBAL KEMERER**  
CHIEF OF STAFF  
**ELIZABETH HILLIARD**  
DIRECTOR OF GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

## POSITION ON PROPOSED LEGISLATION

**BILL:** Senate Bill 55 - Motor Vehicles – Police Stops – Secondary Enforcement and Excludable Evidence

**FROM:** Maryland Office of the Public Defender

**POSITION:** Favorable

**DATE:** January 20, 2026

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The Maryland Office of the Public Defender respectfully requests that the Committee issue a favorable report on Senate Bill 55. Under current law, all but five provisions of Maryland’s traffic laws are subject to primary enforcement. A violation that is subject to primary enforcement means a violation that may serve as the only reason a law enforcement officer stops a vehicle. If enacted, Senate Bill 55, Safer Traffic Stops for All, would make certain violations that are unrelated to driver safety no longer subject to primary enforcement.. Instead, those low-level violations would only be enforceable as secondary violations, meaning a law enforcement officer could not stop a vehicle due to the violation but could issue a ticket or citation or service repair order, after a stop for a different primary violation. Specifically, this bill makes the following offenses subject to secondary enforcement:

- driving with a registration plate expired for less than four months (Md. Trans. §§ 13-401; 13-701) ;
- displaying an expired registration (Md. Trans. §13-411) ;
- driving with only one white-light headlight (Md. Trans. §22-203) ;
- driving without an illuminated license plate (Md. Trans. §22-204) ;
- driving with one outside rearview mirror when the interior rearview mirror is obstructed (Md. Trans. §22-403); and
- driving with excessive window tinting (Md. Trans. §22-406) .

As introduced, Senate Bill 55 includes making Md. Trans § 21-1111 - littering - a secondary offense, but OPD anticipates an early sponsor-amendment removing littering from the enumerated offenses and OPD is amenable to that amendment.

## Current Enforcement Practices Are Dangerous and Lead to Inequities

Traffic stops are one of the most common interactions between law enforcement and the public and they are often dangerous for the officers and the individuals in the car. Vehicle incidents are the second highest cause of law-enforcement-related deaths in Maryland. Since 2021, there have been 62 law-enforcement-related deaths in Maryland; 30% of those deaths involved traffic stops and all of those deaths could have been avoided. While national data show recent declines in overall traffic-related line-of-duty deaths,<sup>1</sup> the threat remains significant and avoidable.<sup>2</sup>

*Unnecessary* traffic stops place people at risk and divert critical resources from responding to serious threats. As modified by the anticipated sponsor amendment, Senate Bill 55 advances meaningful reform by reclassifying six non-safety-related violations as secondary offenses rather than primary reasons for a stop. In practice, this means these low-level traffic violations and equipment issues will be enforceable only after an officer has lawfully stopped a vehicle for a genuine safety or legal concern—such as unsafe speeds, reckless driving, other hazardous conduct, or an ongoing criminal investigation. This change allows law enforcement to focus on genuine safety threats while reducing unnecessary, low-level stops.

Importantly, reforms like those in Senate Bill 55 do not abandon traffic safety; they refocus enforcement on real hazards that endanger lives. Maryland's Race-Based Traffic Stop Data Dashboard<sup>3</sup> continues to demonstrate that equipment and registration violations constitute the

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<sup>1</sup>Claudia Lauer, *New report shows a 25% drop in deaths of on-duty law enforcement officers*, AP News.com (Jan. 6, 2026),

<https://apnews.com/article/onduty-officer-deaths-2025-903002e6d28678f69d02123b9e3b05b4>.

<sup>2</sup> In addition to stops themselves being dangerous, traffic pursuits that begin as stops are dangerous. In fact, fatal collisions during police traffic pursuits have had tragic consequences in Maryland and have been on the rise nationally. Jemar R. Bather, Ph.D; Melody S. Goodman, Ph.D, *National and Regional Trends in Police Pursuit Fatalities in the US*, JamaNetwork.com, (Nov. 21, 2024)

<https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2826559>. Most recently, prosecutors and independent reviews documented multiple deaths of innocent bystanders in Prince George's County in early 2025 after drivers fled from traffic stops, including a child under age four. *See* Jasmine Golden, *Three bystanders have died in crashes after drivers fled police in Md., Wash. Post* (Mar. 28, 2025),

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-va/2025/03/28/drivers-flee-police-pursuit-prince-georges/> These incidents were brief and occurred less than 1.5 miles from the original stop locations, magnifying the public safety risks of conventional enforcement practices.

<sup>3</sup>Maryland Governor's Office of Crime Prevention and Policy Race-Based Traffic Stop Data Dashboard,

<https://app.powerbigov.us/view?r=eyJrIjoIM2Q5ZDhlOTQtNWQ3YS00M2I1LWE0YWQtZWFiY2I1ZjI0YjAyIiwidCI6IjYwYWZlOWUyLTQ5Y2QtNDliMS04ODUxLTY0ZGYwMjc2YTJlOCJ9>

largest share of traffic stops, while moving violations and crashes are a smaller fraction—despite the latter being more directly linked to public safety. As we confront a significant statewide budget deficit, traffic stop reform will allow us to redirect resources to address more critical safety issues, enhancing both public safety and community trust.

Other jurisdictions have pursued similar reforms with measurable impacts. For example, in Philadelphia, the Driving Equality Act restricts police from stopping drivers solely for low-level violations. Since passing the Driving Equality Act, non-safety related stops for Black people fell by 54% while other stops for more serious violations like running red lights or stop signs have actually increased.<sup>4</sup> And, because police officers were able to shift their focus to investigating more serious offenses, Philadelphia police actually recovered guns during *more* traffic stops than they did previously, despite making 70-percent fewer stops.<sup>5</sup> That bears repeating: eliminating non-safety-related stops from primary enforcement actually leads to more, not less, firearms recovered. In Virginia, their traffic reform law reduced racial disparities in traffic enforcement by 19%, and when a local Connecticut jurisdiction refocused enforcement priorities away from low-level offenses, it saw a 250% increase in stops that resulted in a DUI arrest.<sup>6</sup> While outcomes vary and long-term equity effects continue to be evaluated, these reforms demonstrate that alternative enforcement frameworks can reduce needless police interactions without compromising safety.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Sammy Caiola, *Data shows Philly traffic stops involving Black men are down 54%: A Philadelphia law intended to reduce the number of traffic stops for minor vehicle violations appears to be working, according to a new analysis of Philadelphia Police Dept.*, WHYYY (Mar. 6, 2023), [why.org/articles/philadelphiadriving-equality-act-data-traffic-stops-black-men-reduction/](https://why.org/articles/philadelphiadriving-equality-act-data-traffic-stops-black-men-reduction/).

<sup>5</sup> Howard Monroe, *New Philly law takes weapons off the streets, data shows*, CBSNews.com (Mar. 3, 2023), [www.cbsnews.com/philadelphia/news/new-philly-law-takes-weapons-off-the-streets-data-shows/](https://www.cbsnews.com/philadelphia/news/new-philly-law-takes-weapons-off-the-streets-data-shows/).

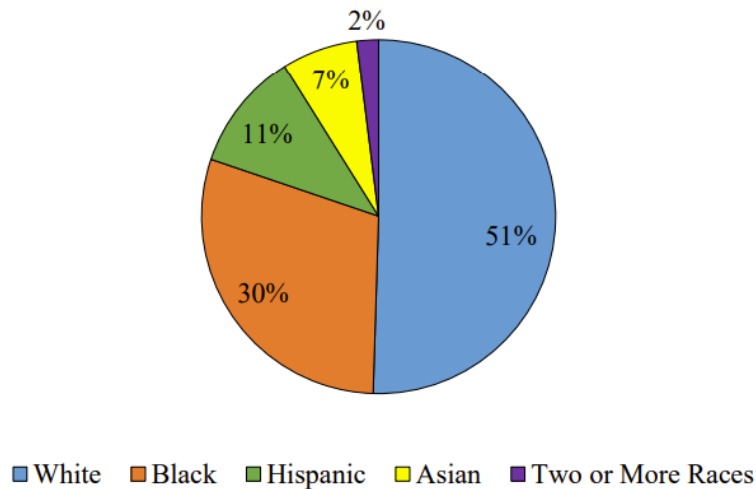
<sup>6</sup> Tom Condon, *After a poor start, CT's anti-racial profiling effort is making progress: New legislation could significantly change how police conduct traffic stops*, CTMirror (Jan. 30, 2022), [perma.cc/5JKB-HF2Z](https://perma.cc/5JKB-HF2Z).

<sup>7</sup> Beyond enforcement practice reforms, cities nationwide are also embracing technology-driven strategies to improve road safety. For example, San Jose's AI-powered road-hazard detection system correctly identifies potholes with 97 % accuracy and is being expanded to spot debris and other conditions that can lead to serious crashes, helping cities prioritize maintenance and hazard mitigation without increasing police-initiated stops. These innovative approaches demonstrate that alternative enforcement frameworks and data-informed safety technologies can reduce needless police interactions and improve transportation safety without compromising public safety outcomes. See, Jeff McMurray, *How San Jose and other cities are using AI to improve road safety*, LA Times (Nov. 17, 2025) <https://www.latimes.com/business/story/2025-11-17/how-san-jose-other-cities-are-using-ai-to-improve-road-safety>).

## Black People are Disproportionately Stopped for Traffic Infractions

Even when law enforcement has the best of intentions, unconscious and conscious biases impact policing. This is particularly true when it comes to traffic stops. The Maryland Office of the Public Defender urges this Committee to accept and confront the undeniable reality that unnecessary traffic stops in Maryland disproportionately impact Black drivers and contribute to inequities in policing. Data from the Governor’s Office of Crime Prevention and Policy (GOCPP) shows that in 2023, Black drivers accounted for approximately 43% of all traffic stops, despite Black Marylanders making up about 32% of the state’s population.<sup>8</sup> In contrast, white drivers comprised 39% of stops while representing 57% of the population. And in 2024, data from the Maryland Judiciary shows that even though white drivers comprised 57% of the driving population, they only received 25% of all traffic citations. And while 30% of Maryland’s drivers in 2024 were Black, Black drivers received 57% of all traffic citations.<sup>9</sup>

**Exhibit 1**  
**Maryland’s Age 16+ Driving Population**  
**2023**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau; Department of Legislative Services

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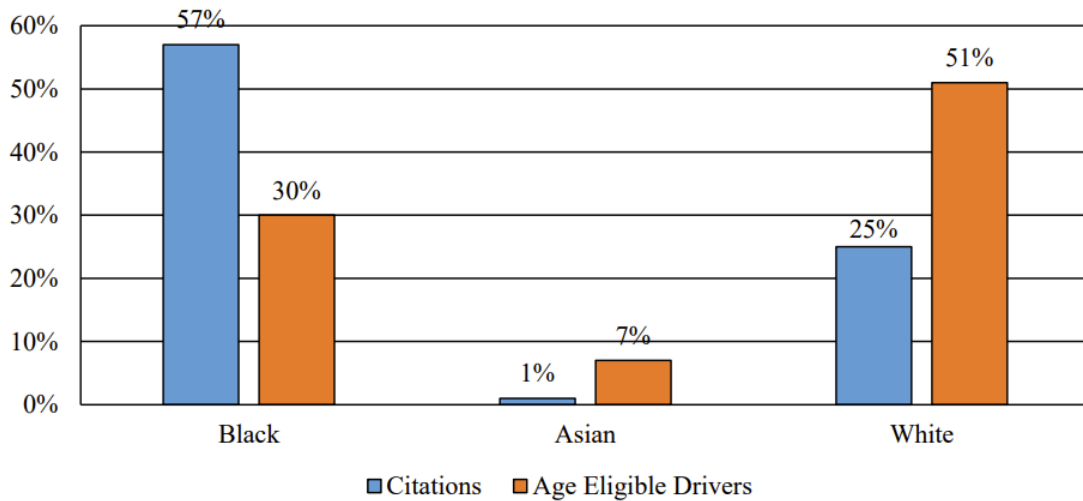
<sup>8</sup> Maryland Governor’s Governor's Office of Crime Prevention and Policy Race-Based Traffic Stop Data Dashboard,

<https://app.powerbigov.us/view?r=eyJrIjoieM2Q5ZDhlOTQ3YS00M2I1LWE0YWQtZWFiY2I1ZjI0YjAyIiwidCI6IjYwYWZlOWUyLTQ5Y2Q0NDliMS04ODUxLTlY0ZGYwMjc2YTJlOCJ9>

<sup>9</sup> Racial Equity Impact Note, Maryland Department of Legislative Services, SB292, 2025, <https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/Pubs/BudgetFiscal/2025RS-SB0292-REIN.pdf>

Black drivers in Maryland “are nearly twice as likely to be issued a traffic citation [for non-safety related violations] than what would be expected given their proportion of the State’s driving population.”<sup>10</sup> And they are overrepresented as recipients for low level, non-safety related infractions:

**Exhibit 2**  
**District Court Data for Specified**  
**Traffic Offense Citations**  
**2024**



Source: Administrative Office of the Courts; Department of Legislative Services

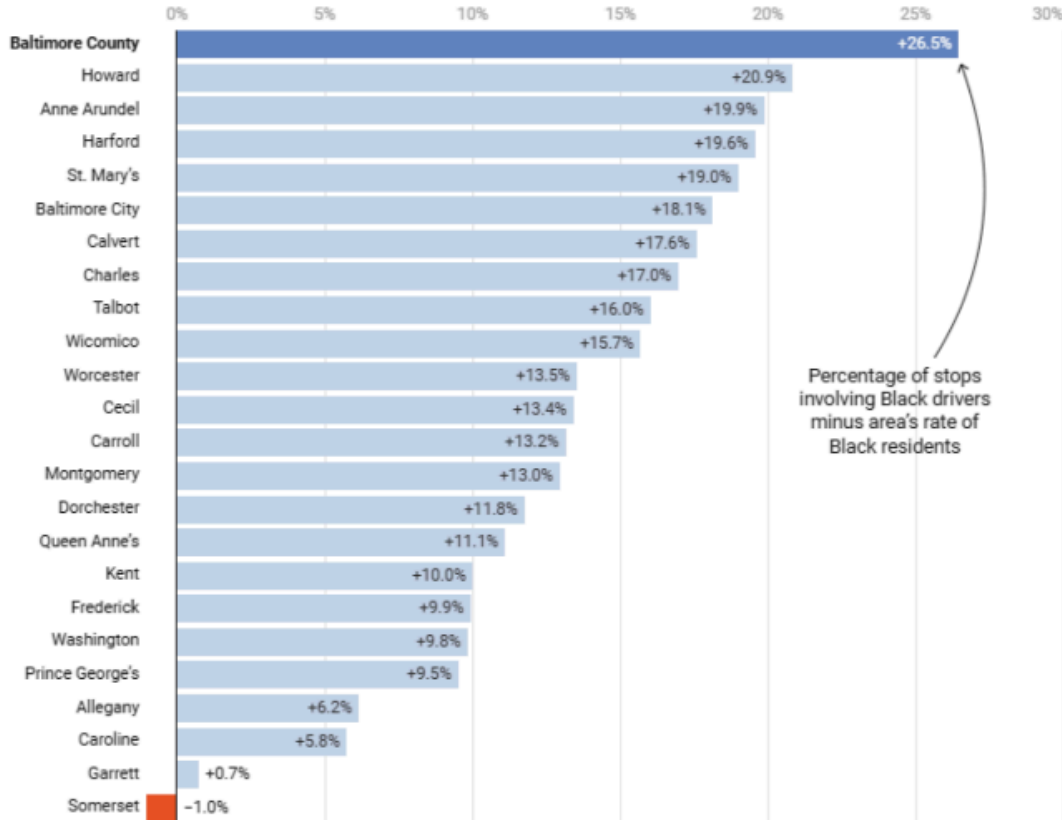
In addition to the above-referenced statistics, The [Baltimore Banner](#) also analyzed traffic stop data from GOCPP, and concluded similarly, that throughout Maryland, Black drivers get stopped at disproportionately higher rates than other drivers.

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<sup>10</sup> Racial Equity Impact Note, Maryland Department of Legislative Services, SB292, 2025, <https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/Pubs/BudgetFiscal/2025RS-SB0292-REIN.pdf>

## Black drivers get stopped at high rates throughout Maryland – but Baltimore County stands out

Just about everywhere in Maryland, local police departments issue tickets to Black drivers at rates disproportionate to their areas' demographics. But Baltimore County's disparity is the starkest by far.



Data represents traffic stops from 2018–2024, beginning when data was first submitted in a consistent format by departments statewide.

The rate of tickets issued to Black drivers in each area is based on the stops made by the law enforcement agency in that area that issued the most tickets – the county police department in Anne Arundel, Howard, Montgomery, Prince George's and Baltimore counties, the Baltimore City Police Department in Baltimore City and the county sheriff's offices in all other areas.

Chart: Greg Morton/The Banner • Source: Governor's Office of Crime Prevention and Policy

Unfortunately, the racial disparity is even worse when looking at data solely for equipment stops, like an unilluminated license plate. In Anne Arundel County, for example, Black people made up 42% of all equipment related stops, despite comprising only 20% of the population. In Baltimore County, Black people were stopped for 65% of all equipment related stops despite comprising only 32% of the population; and in Montgomery County, Black people were stopped for 41% of all equipment related traffic stops despite the fact that only 20% of Montgomery County is Black. Low-level traffic stops are also more dangerous, and especially so for Black and Brown people. Data shows that law enforcement is 1.9 times as likely to use force on white drivers during a non-safety related stop than at a safety stop; and they are 2.9 times more likely to use force on Black drivers at a

non-safety related stop than at safety stop, and 2.4 times more likely to use force on Latine drivers at a non-safety related stop than at safety stop.<sup>11</sup>

Regardless of why, Maryland's data supports that Black people are disproportionately stopped for traffic violations. The legislature must respond by eliminating the number of times and ways an officer can exercise discretion to initiate a traffic stop when safety is not at issue – for example, when someone has failed to pay their registration fee. This change would not impact road safety, it would merely expand, by a small number, the amount of stops already limited to secondary enforcement. This is not a new idea. Maryland has already recognized that there are non-safety violations that can be subject to secondary enforcement including an object hanging from a rear view mirror that obstructs a driver's view; driving with a partially obscured license plate; violating passenger restrictions on a provisional license; driving without headlights in rainy conditions; and failing to wear a seatbelt by a passenger over 16 in the back seat. Senate Bill 55 simply proposes to include six other minor infractions like driving with only one side mirror when the rear view mirror is obstructed, failing to pay a registration fee for less than four months; failing to illuminate a license plate; and having one headlight out.

Reducing the amount of times an officer can exercise discretion for non-safety related stops will drive down disparity and allow for more focused enforcement. We have seen this successful outcome in jurisdictions who have made the changes SB55 proposes. There are quantifiable benefits to limiting traffic stops. For example, when police officers in Fayetteville, North Carolina, stopped making traffic stops for certain low-level traffic stops, car accidents went down, and non-traffic-related crime was unaffected.<sup>12</sup> In Philadelphia, once police officers were able to shift their focus away from low level infractions and towards investigating more serious offenses, Philadelphia police actually recovered more guns during more traffic stops, despite making 70-percent fewer stops.<sup>13</sup> The changes that these other jurisdictions have made to traffic

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<sup>11</sup> Matthew A. Graham, Scarlet Neath, Kim S. Buchanan, Kerry Mulligan, Tracey Lloyd, and Phillip Atiba, *Racial disparities in use of force at traffic stops*, Center for Policing Equity, (Aug. 20, 2024) <https://policingequity.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/CPE-Use-of-Force-at-Traffic-Stops-Data-Brief-2024.pdf>.

<sup>12</sup> Mike Dolan Fliss, Frank Baumgartner, Paul Delamater, Steve Marshall, Charles Poole, & Whitney Robinson, *Re-prioritizing traffic stops to reduce motor vehicle crash outcomes and racial disparities*, *Inj. Epidemiol*, Vol. 7, Article 3 (2020), [injepijournal.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s40621-019-0227-6](http://injepijournal.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s40621-019-0227-6).

<sup>13</sup> Howard Monroe, *New Philly law takes weapons off the streets, data shows*, CBSNews.com (Mar.

enforcement demonstrates that the use of armed police officers is not the only or even the best method for low-level traffic enforcement.

Moreover, this is not novel. Maryland would join at least 12 state or local governments that have passed policies to limit non-safety-related stops, including California; Illinois; New York; Oregon; Virginia; Ann Arbor, Michigan; Chapel Hill, North Carolina; Memphis, Tennessee; Philadelphia; Pittsburgh; Shaker Heights, Ohio; and West Hollywood, California.<sup>14</sup>

Maryland's data unequivocally indicates that Black people are disproportionately stopped for traffic stops and also disproportionately subject to searches, citations, and arrests.<sup>15</sup> Senate Bill 55 will address this inequity, by converting minor, regulatory-based infractions that bear no relationship to road safety to secondary stops. Senate Bill 55 reduces the number of reasons that officers can initiate a traffic stop, which will undoubtedly reduce the number of *unnecessary* traffic stops. We are long overdue for Maryland to change the way our traffic laws are enforced. Senate Bill 55 will help us on the way to ensure that traffic enforcement works fairly for all Marylanders, improve community trust, and enhance public safety.

**For these reasons, the Maryland Office of the Public Defender urges this Committee to issue a favorable report on Senate Bill 55.**

**Submitted by: Maryland Office of the Public Defender, Government Relations Division.**

**Authored by: Deborah Katz Levi and Tia Holmes, [Deborah.Levi@Maryland.Gov](mailto:Deborah.Levi@Maryland.Gov);**

**[Tia.Holmes@Maryland.gov](mailto:Tia.Holmes@Maryland.gov).**

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3, 2023),

[www.cbsnews.com/philadelphia/news/new-philly-law-takes-weapons-off-the-streets-data-shows/](http://www.cbsnews.com/philadelphia/news/new-philly-law-takes-weapons-off-the-streets-data-shows/).

<sup>14</sup> At least 18 jurisdictions have limited these stops by police order, including Alliance, Nebraska; Berkeley, California; Culver City, California; Duluth, MN; Fayetteville, North Carolina; Hamden, Connecticut; Lansing, Michigan; Los Angeles, California; Mecklenburg County, North Carolina; Minneapolis, Minnesota; Nashville, Tennessee; New Haven, Connecticut; Newington, Connecticut; Oakland, California; Portland, Oregon; Ramsey County, Minnesota (Maplewood, New Brighton, Roseville, Saint Anthony Village, and Saint Paul); San Francisco; and Seattle, Washington. And at least six jurisdictions have limited these stops by prosecutorial policy, including Chittenden County, Vermont; Ingham County, Michigan; Ramsey County, Minnesota; San Francisco County, California; Suffolk County, Massachusetts; and Washtenaw County, Michigan.

<sup>15</sup> Racial Equity Impact Note, Maryland Department of Legislative Services, SB292, 2025,

<https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/Pubs/BudgetFiscal/2025RS-SB0292-REIN.pdf> (“As past research has consistently shown, Black and Hispanic drivers are more likely to be stopped, searched, and cited compared to white drivers.”)

# **SB 55 Motor Vehicles Police Stops CCJR FAV.pdf**

Uploaded by: Heather Warnken

Position: FAV



**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 55**

**Motor Vehicles - Secondary Enforcement and Excludable Evidence**

TO: Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: **Center for Criminal Justice Reform, University of Baltimore School of Law**

DATE: January 16, 2026

The University of Baltimore School of Law Center for Criminal Justice Reform supports community driven efforts to improve public safety and address the harm and inequity caused by the criminal legal system. In alignment with this mission, we offer our strong support of SB 55.

Traffic stops are one of the most common sources of interactions between members of the public and police, and non-safety related traffic stops make up the bulk of these stops. Non-safety related traffic stops refers to stops for low-risk infractions that do not create a safety risk to those in or outside of the vehicle, such as broken taillight, expired registration or emission stickers. In the state of Maryland, according to the data, stops for non-safety related equipment and registration violations make up approximately 44% of all traffic stops, far more than moving violations and reckless driving.<sup>1</sup>

By making certain non-safety related traffic laws secondary violations as specified in the bill, SB 55 will simultaneously redirect police resources to more pressing public safety concerns, while also improving relationships between police and the community. This important reform will also promote racial equity by addressing a significant source of the pervasive racial disparities in Maryland's criminal justice system.

**I. Non-safety related traffic stops have no meaningful positive effect on public safety while perpetuating racial disparities and eroding systemic legitimacy.**

A well-established body of research demonstrates that non-safety related stops improve neither road safety nor crime-fighting efforts. Studies demonstrate these stops seldom result in the recovery of illegal firearms, while distracting law enforcement from more targeted and evidence based policing strategies effective for addressing violent crime.

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<sup>1</sup> "Race-Based Traffic Stop Data Dashboard," Governor's Office of Crime Prevention and Policy, accessed August 13, 2024. <https://gocpp.maryland.gov/data-dashboards/traffic-stop-data-dashboard/>.

Moreover, 2023 data demonstrates that police stopped Black drivers in Maryland at rates 10 percent higher than white drivers.<sup>2</sup> Although Black people make up 30% of Maryland’s population, they account for 43% of those stopped, and are far more likely to be searched and/or arrested during these interactions than their white counterparts.<sup>3</sup> These realities cause significant stress that is unequally borne by Maryland’s Black drivers.

These dynamics erode trust between police and the communities they serve and the legitimacy of the criminal justice system overall. This is further damaged, often tragically, through preventable instances of use of force and other physically, economically, and psychologically distressing interactions between drivers and police. Given the numerous incidents documented in Baltimore and throughout the country, it is imperative that we act to limit unnecessary interactions with law enforcement, and the harassment and violence it too often leads to with impunity, especially when not captured on film. The distress caused by these types of interactions with police, disproportionately borne by Black Marylanders, has long been a significant impediment to community collaboration and trust.

## **II. Other jurisdictions across the country have demonstrated this reform can be implemented effectively and to important benefit.**

Due to the volume of research demonstrating the problem and pointing to effective solutions, other jurisdictions throughout the country have begun embracing these reforms. For example, Virginia’s Traffic Reform Law, which limits police authority to initiate stops for non-safety-related violations, led to a reduction in racial disparities in traffic enforcement by 19%.<sup>4</sup> Philadelphia’s Driving Equality Bill, which reclassifies certain non-safety related infractions as secondary offenses and prohibits police from stopping drivers for these violations led to significant reductions in racial disparities with no negative impacts on traffic safety.<sup>5</sup>

For these reasons, we urge a favorable report on SB 55.

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<sup>2</sup> Maryland Governor’s Office of Crime Prevention and Policy, [Race-Based Traffic Stop Data Dashboard](#), 2023.

<sup>3</sup> Governor’s Office of Crime Prevention and Policy, [Race-Based Traffic Stop Data Dashboard](https://gocpp.maryland.gov/data-dashboards/traffic-stop-data-dashboard/) <https://gocpp.maryland.gov/data-dashboards/traffic-stop-data-dashboard/>.

<sup>4</sup> [www.wtkr.com/news/politics/virginia-house-bill-would-reverse-law-limiting-minor-traffic-stops#:~:text=RICHMOND%2C%20Va.,for%20a%20minor%20traffic%20violation.](http://www.wtkr.com/news/politics/virginia-house-bill-would-reverse-law-limiting-minor-traffic-stops#:~:text=RICHMOND%2C%20Va.,for%20a%20minor%20traffic%20violation.)

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.phila.gov/media/20211109145453/executive-order-2021-06.pdf>.

**MDGA26\_SB55\_JoShifrin\_JUFJ\_FAV.pdf**

Uploaded by: Jo Shifrin

Position: FAV

January 20, 2026

Jo Shifrin  
Bethesda, MD 20817

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF BILL SB55**

**Motor Vehicles – Police Stops – Secondary Enforcement and Excludable Evidence**

**TO:** Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee

**FROM:** Jo Shifrin

**My name is Jo Shifrin. I am a resident of Bethesda. I am submitting this testimony in support of Bill SB55, Motor Vehicles – Police Stops – Secondary Enforcement and Excludable Evidence, on behalf of Jews United for Justice.**

I am a retiree who moved to Bethesda to be near my grandchildren. My faith informs my belief in how society should treat its residents. *Tzedek Tirdof*, to pursue justice, means that I must try to make the world more fair for everyone and help everyone to live a safe and healthy life.

There is ample evidence that police officers, like many members of our society, experience racial bias. As a result, Black and brown residents of our state are disproportionately stopped by police. Often, these are pretextual stops, whereby the police use non-safety related reasons to stop a car in order to conduct a search of the vehicle in the hopes that they will find illegal drugs or weapons. These stops are considered non-safety related because they are based upon expired registrations, partially obscured license plates, littering, window tint, etc. which do not affect the safety of either the passengers of the vehicle or other drivers and passengers on the road. And these stops are not effective.

In 2022, in Montgomery County, Maryland, guns were found in less than one-half of one percent of the 36,000 stops made. In Maryland, stops for equipment and registration related violations make up about 44% of all stops. However, even if the police stop cars to enforce vehicle code violations, they risk causing as much harm as the pretextual stops do. These stops increase the physical and psychological harm to members of the Black community and can contribute to distrust of law enforcement. Moreover, these stops do not increase public safety nor do they effectively fight crime. They also divert police resources from serious safety concerns.

SB55 will require that police officers document the reason for all stops. If a motorist is driving recklessly or speeding, SB55 does not prevent the police from stopping a vehicle that is potentially risking the safety of everyone on the road.

Excluding non-safety related stops will achieve a number of important things. It will reduce racial disparities in traffic stops, thus creating a sense of fairness, especially in communities of color. It will promote safety and it will reduce community trauma. It will vastly improve community and policing relations, and it will allow the police departments to deploy their officers more effectively so that they can focus on more serious crimes.

Given the fact that there are so many vacancies on police forces, it seems prudent to allocate limited police resources to the most serious crimes, including those involving motor vehicles. Rather than spending time stopping cars for a single burned out tail light, failing to illuminate a registration plate, or having dark tinted windows, wouldn't it be better for the police to focus on motorists who are speeding, driving aggressively, are obviously impaired or who are distracted while they drive?

I truly believe that SB55 will benefit Maryland residents in a variety of ways, not least of which is by increasing traffic safety, public safety, and promoting equity.

**I urge the Judicial Proceedings Committee to issue a favorable report on SB55.**

**SB 55 - Favorable - SSJC Written Testimony .pdf**

Uploaded by: Joanna Silver

Position: FAV



## TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB-55

**Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee, January 20, 2026**

My name is Joanna Silver. I am a resident of Silver Spring, in District 18. I submit this testimony on behalf of the Silver Spring Justice Coalition in support of SB-55 - Safer Traffic Stops for All (Motor Vehicles – Police Stops – Secondary Enforcement and Excludable Evidence).

The Silver Spring Justice Coalition is an organization of community members, faith groups, and civil and human rights organizations from throughout Montgomery County that works to reduce the presence of police in our communities; eliminate violence and harm by police; establish transparency and accountability; and redirect public funds toward community needs. Three years ago, we advocated with our County Council, along with many other members of our local community, in support of a bill called the Safety and Traffic Equity in Policing (STEP) Act, which was similar in many respects to SB 55. Last year we proudly supported, through both written and oral testimony, the predecessor to this bill, SB 929.

When Montgomery County introduced the STEP Act, we had a successful public hearing in which 40 people submitted testimony in favor of the bill (and only 9 opposed). However, we were disappointed to learn that state law preempted our County from legislating in this critical area. For this reason, we are grateful to Senator Sydnor for reintroducing Safer Traffic Stops For All, SB 55, which has the same aim as our local bill: to increase racial equity and public safety by prohibiting police from stopping people for certain non-safety-related traffic violations.

This Committee will hear data from many others about traffic stops and their impacts on racial equity and public safety state-wide and nationally, so I will focus my testimony on why this bill is so important for my County. Racial disparities in traffic enforcement have been a long-standing problem in Montgomery County. Over 20 years ago, the NAACP filed a complaint with the US Department of Justice alleging that the Montgomery County Police Department (MCPD) engaged in discriminatory traffic enforcement. That complaint led to [a memorandum of agreement](#) that ordered MCPD to collect and report data so that their discriminatory practices could be tracked.

A [report by our Council's Office of Legislative Oversight](#) (OLO), issued at the end of 2022, revealed that disparities in traffic enforcement persist and have even worsened in recent years. From

2018 to 2022, Black and Hispanic drivers were stopped, cited, searched, and arrested at rates far exceeding their representation in our population, while White and Asian drivers were stopped at rates far below their population numbers. While our police department repeatedly blames race-based disparities in traffic enforcement on interlopers from Washington, D.C. and Prince George's County, this racist trope was disproved by the report's finding that 73% of stops were of County residents, and that race-based disparities were comparable for residents and non-residents.<sup>1</sup>

The OLO report also revealed that the greatest race-based disparities in traffic enforcement were seen for non-safety-related traffic violations. Violations under Titles 22 and 13, which are addressed by this bill, represented two of the four worst areas of race-based disparities in traffic enforcement. In fact, the report concluded that equipment violations had a racial disparity score that was 20 points higher than the racial disparity score for moving violations.

These disparities in traffic enforcement come at a high cost. This includes eroding community trust and compounding already existing race-based economic disparities.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, it is well documented that traffic stops can be dangerous and deadly,<sup>3</sup> with officers trained to anticipate danger and act aggressively to protect themselves. This is of particular concern to us because police use force against our BIPOC community members at far higher rates than White people. For example, in 2024, 81% of use of force incidents in Montgomery County were against Black and Hispanic people.<sup>4</sup>

The risk that force and other harm will be visited upon Black and brown drivers is compounded by the fact that those drivers are far more likely to be detained and searched during a traffic stop. The Office of Legislative Oversight report on traffic stops in Montgomery County revealed that 74% of all searches taking place during a traffic stop were of Black or Hispanic community members.

Significantly, these searches rarely result in finding contraband. While using traffic enforcement to conduct criminal enforcement can occasionally yield results, it is a needle in a haystack approach that is extremely ineffective. In Montgomery County in 2022, 172 guns were seized during 35,000 traffic stops<sup>5</sup> – in other words, less than ½ of 1% of all traffic stops resulted in gun seizures. In

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<sup>1</sup>[OLO Memorandum Report 2022-12](#), pp. 11-12.

<sup>2</sup>The Fines and Fees Justice Center Clearinghouse, <https://finesandfeesjusticecenter.org/>.

<sup>3</sup><https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/31/us/police-traffic-stops-killings.html>.

<sup>4</sup>Montgomery County Police Department [Annual Use of Force Report](#), 2024 at pg. 10.

<sup>5</sup>Briefing to the Transportation/Environment and Public Safety Committees of the Montgomery County Council, February 6, 2023, beginning at approximately minute 1:30:00. [https://montgomerycountymd.granicus.com/player/clip/16676?view\\_id=169&redirect=true&h=3eb410096b7046c63f6e892648d30832](https://montgomerycountymd.granicus.com/player/clip/16676?view_id=169&redirect=true&h=3eb410096b7046c63f6e892648d30832)

years past, that percentage was even smaller.<sup>6</sup> Research from jurisdictions around the country reveals similar data, with contraband being seized during a very small percentage of traffic stops. I will not repeat that data here as I know that many other national experts will be submitting testimony in which they will share that important information.

Instead, I will close by talking about why this bill is so important to public safety in Montgomery County. The Maryland Department of Transportation's Crash Data Dashboard shows that in 2025 our County lost 43 people to fatal car crashes.<sup>7</sup> The leading causes of those 43 fatalities were speeding and driving impaired. For comparison's sake, there were 24 homicides in Montgomery County in 2025.<sup>8</sup> SB 55 will ensure that police in my County use their limited time and resources to target drivers engaged in the speeding, impaired, and reckless driving that so greatly increases the risks of traffic fatalities and injuries in our County. While we want police to address gun violence and other crime, we want them to do it through careful and effective investigations, not through racially-biased fishing expeditions.

As you will hear from many others, SB 55 will make Maryland part of a national movement, led in some jurisdictions by law enforcement itself, that recognizes that equity and safety can go hand in hand. My County was unable to join this movement because its legislators were preempted by state law. Given this, we ask you to use the power that state law delegates to you and respectfully urge you to issue a favorable report on SB 55.

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<sup>6</sup>Policing Advisory Commission, [Findings and Recommendations for Traffic Enforcement](#), December 2021, at pp. 11-12.

<sup>7</sup><https://zerodeathsmd.gov/resources/crashdata/>

<sup>8</sup>[Montgomery County Saw a Slight Increase in Homicides in 2025](#), The Banner/Montgomery

◆ silverspringjustice.wordpress.com ◆ Facebook: ssjusticecoalition ◆ Twitter: @SilverCoalition ◆

◆ silverspringjustice@gmail.com ◆

**MD SB55\_NPAP\_FAV.pdf**

Uploaded by: Keisha James

Position: FAV



**FAVORABLE - SB 55**

**Written Testimony** of National Lawyers Guild-National Police Accountability Project, Keisha James, Staff Attorney

**Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee** – Tuesday, January 20, 2026

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

The National Lawyers Guild National Police Accountability Project (“NPAP”) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to holding law enforcement officers accountable to constitutional and professional standards. We urge you to give a favorable review to SB 55, which will save lives by eliminating unnecessary encounters between civilians and law enforcement officers that too often result in violence. SB 55 seeks to prohibit drivers from being stopped solely for a secondary violation (e.g., one headlight out) that does not pose a public safety risk. SB 55 will also reduce racial disparities in policing by removing the incentive for law enforcement officers to engage in pretextual stops which disproportionately target Black drivers.

The traffic stop is the single most common reason for contact between police officers and civilians in the United States.<sup>1</sup> This is so because in most jurisdictions, including within Maryland, law enforcement officers have the authority to stop motorists for a vast range of reasons, including very minor traffic violations that do not jeopardize public safety such as a single broken headlight or taillight.

Traffic stops for minor violations unnecessarily expose civilians to law enforcement contact and use of force. Many law enforcement encounters with civilians that result in fatalities begin as traffic stops for low-level violations. For example, in 2016, Philando Castile was shot and killed by a St. Anthony, Minnesota police officer during a traffic stop for a broken tail light.<sup>2</sup> In 2022, Daunte Wright was shot and killed by a Brooklyn Center, Minnesota, police officer who pulled Wright over for driving with an air freshener hanging from his

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<sup>1</sup> Bureau of Justice Statistics, Traffic Stops, <https://bjs.ojp.gov/taxonomy/term/traffic-stops>; Susannah N. Tapp and Elizabeth Davis, Contacts Between Police and the Public, 2022, Bureau Just. Stat., available at: <https://bjs.ojp.gov/library/publications/contacts-between-police-and-public-2022>.

<sup>2</sup> Reg Chapman, *Eight years later, Philando Castile's legacy lives on*, CBS News (July 6, 2024), available at: <https://www.cbsnews.com/minnesota/news/eight-years-later-philando-castiles-legacy-lives-on/>.



rearview mirror and expired registration tags.<sup>3</sup> In January 2023, Tyre Nichols was beaten to death by police officers in Memphis, Tennessee, who claimed Nichols was driving recklessly—a claim that has since been refuted by video evidence of the encounter.<sup>4</sup>

Even when traffic stops do not end in civilian fatalities, they can still leave motorists traumatized and feeling degraded.<sup>5</sup> They also expose drivers to greater scrutiny from law enforcement, as many traffic stops evolve into continued police questioning, vehicle searches, and even arrests.

The brunt of these harms is borne by Black drivers. Data show that officers, employing their broad discretion to initiate traffic stops, disproportionately stop Black drivers.<sup>6</sup> Federal law authorizes officers to engage in this racial profiling with impunity. Under U.S. Supreme Court precedent, an officer’s particular motivation for pulling a driver over—even if it is racial or personal animus towards the driver—does not affect the legality of the traffic stop so long as the driver committed some traffic violation, however insignificant.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> The New York Times, *What to Know About the Death of Daunte Wright*, The New York Times (Feb. 21, 2022), available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/article/daunte-wright-death-minnesota.html>.

<sup>4</sup> Bevan Hurley, *Memphis police chief says there’s ‘no proof’ Tyre Nichols should have been stopped for reckless driving*, The Independent (Jan. 27, 2023), available at: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/crime/tyre-nichols-memphis-police-reckless-driving-b2270667.html>.

<sup>5</sup> See Frank R. Baumgartner, *et al.*, *Suspect Citizens: What 20 Million Traffic Stops Tell Us About Policing and Race* 13 (2018) (explaining that targeted traffic stops can be “humiliating, frustrating, and unfair”); Sam McCann, *Low-Level Traffic Stops Are Ineffective—and Sometimes Deadly. Why Are They Still Happening?*, Vera Institute (Mar. 29, 2023), available at: <https://www.vera.org/news/low-level-traffic-stops-are-ineffective-and-sometimes-deadly-why-are-they-still-happening> (“Repeated stops also place Black drivers in situations in which they are at risk of physical, economic, or psychological harm.”).

<sup>6</sup> See, e.g., David A. Harris, *Driving While Black: Racial Profiling On Our Nation’s Highways*, ACLU (Jun. 7, 1999), available at: <https://www.aclu.org/publications/driving-while-black-racial-profiling-our-nations-highways>; Jordan Blair Woods, *Traffic Without the Police*, 73 Stan. L. Rev. 1471, 1475 (2021) (“Several studies show that Black and Latinx motorists in particular are disproportionately stopped by police for traffic violations and disproportionately questioned, frisked, searched, cited, and arrested during traffic stops.”).

<sup>7</sup> See *Whren v. United States*, 517 U.S. 806, 814 (1996) (“[T]he Fourth Amendment’s concern with ‘reasonableness’ allows certain actions to be taken in certain circumstances, whatever the subjective intent.”) (emphasis in original); *Maryland v. Wilson*, 519 U.S. 408, 423 (1997) (Kennedy, J. dissenting) (The Court’s holding in *Whren* “permit[s] vehicle stops if there is some objective indication that a violation has been committed regardless of the officer’s real motives;” its “practical effect . . . is to allow the police to stop vehicles in almost countless circumstances.”).



SB 55 would protect drivers by eliminating unnecessary traffic stops. The bill classifies as secondary violations certain offenses such as driving with one non-functioning light, a damaged mirror, or a registration that expired within the last four months. These minor traffic infractions pose no risk to public safety, but law enforcement response to these violations does. Limiting police contact with civilians to circumstances where a driver has jeopardized public safety reduces the risk of harm to civilians. Additionally, by limiting opportunities for police to stop drivers—and by requiring officers to record their reasons for conducting the stops—SB 55 would help reduce racial disparities in traffic stops. Further, prosecutors will no longer be able to rely on evidence obtained during stops where the justification is only a secondary violation.

In passing SB 55, Maryland would not be the first jurisdiction to reimagine traffic safety. In 2020, Virginia passed a law prohibiting police officers in the state from stopping drivers for minor infractions such as tinted windows, expired registration stickers, and broken taillights.<sup>8</sup> Philadelphia's Driving Equality Law, which went into effect on March 3, 2022, prohibits police from initiating traffic stops for secondary traffic violations including expired vehicle registration and a single dysfunctional brake light.<sup>9</sup> Other state and local governments have considered implementing, or have already implemented, similar laws.<sup>10</sup> Maryland can and should join the ranks of these jurisdictions reimaging traffic safety.

We urge you to prioritize the safety of Maryland drivers and give SB 55 a favorable review. I am happy to answer questions. You can contact me at [keisha.npap@nlg.org](mailto:keisha.npap@nlg.org).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Keisha James', written over a horizontal line.

Keisha James

National Police Accountability Project

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<sup>8</sup> Virginia, HB 5058 and SB 5029 (2022).

<sup>9</sup> Philadelphia, Penn. Bill No. 210636-A (2021).

<sup>10</sup> Mapping the Progress of Policies to Limit Non-Safety Related Traffic Stops, Vera, available at: <https://www.vera.org/ending-mass-incarceration/criminalization-racial-disparities/public-safety/redefining-public-safety-initiative/sensible-traffic-ordinances-for-public-safety/stops-map> (last updated Oct. 23, 2025); David K. Kirkpatrick, Steve Eder, and Kim Barker, *Cities Try to Turn the Tide on Police Traffic Stops*, The New York Times (Apr. 15, 2022), available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/15/us/police-traffic-stops.html>.

**sb0055:HB00812\_Police traffic stops.pdf**

Uploaded by: Liz Enagonio

Position: FAV

# SENATE BILL 55

R5, E2

(PRE-FILED)

6lr1537  
CF HB 81

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By: **Senator Sydnor**

Requested: October 31, 2025

Introduced and read first time: January 14, 2026

Assigned to: Judicial Proceedings

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## A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Motor Vehicles – Police Stops – Secondary Enforcement and Excludable**  
3 **Evidence**

4 FOR the purpose of requiring a police officer to document all reasons for a traffic stop or  
5 other stop on a citation or police report resulting from the stop; establishing that  
6 certain evidence obtained during a traffic stop or other stop in violation of certain  
7 provisions of law may be excluded as evidence in certain proceedings; authorizing a  
8 police officer to enforce certain provisions of the Maryland Vehicle Law only as a  
9 secondary action; applying certain provisions of this Act retroactively; and generally  
10 relating to police stops.

11 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,  
12 Article – Criminal Procedure  
13 Section 2–109  
14 Annotated Code of Maryland  
15 (2025 Replacement Volume)

16 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,  
17 Article – Transportation  
18 Section 13–401, 13–411, 13–701, 21–1111, 22–203(b), 22–204(f), 22–403, and  
19 22–406(i)(2)  
20 Annotated Code of Maryland  
21 (2020 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

22 BY repealing and reenacting, without amendments,  
23 Article – Transportation  
24 Section 22–406(i)(1)  
25 Annotated Code of Maryland  
26 (2020 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

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EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.



1 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,  
2 That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

3 **Article – Criminal Procedure**

4 2–109.

5 (a) At the commencement of a traffic stop or other stop, absent exigent  
6 circumstances, a police officer shall:

7 (1) display proper identification to the stopped individual; and

8 (2) provide the following information to the stopped individual:

9 (i) the officer's name;

10 (ii) the officer's identification number issued by the law enforcement  
11 agency the officer is representing;

12 (iii) the name of the law enforcement agency the police officer is  
13 representing; and

14 (iv) the reason for the traffic stop or other stop.

15 (b) **A POLICE OFFICER SHALL DOCUMENT ALL REASONS FOR A TRAFFIC**  
16 **STOP OR OTHER STOP ON ANY CITATION OR POLICE REPORT RESULTING FROM THE**  
17 **STOP.**

18 (C) A police officer's failure to comply with subsection (a) of this section:

19 (1) may be grounds for administrative disciplinary action against the  
20 officer; and

21 (2) may [not] serve as the basis for the exclusion of evidence under the  
22 exclusionary rule.

23 [(c)] (D) A police officer may not prohibit or prevent a citizen from recording the  
24 police officer's actions if the citizen is otherwise acting lawfully and safely.

25 SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That the Laws of Maryland read  
26 as follows:

27 **Article – Transportation**

28 13–401.

1 (a) This section applies to any vehicle required to be registered under this title.

2 (b) (1) If a vehicle is not registered, a person may not drive the vehicle on a  
3 highway in this State.

4 (2) (i) If a person is convicted of a violation of this subsection that  
5 involved the use of an off-highway recreational vehicle on a highway, the court shall notify  
6 the Administration of the violation.

7 (ii) The Chief Judge of the District Court, in conjunction with the  
8 Administration, shall establish uniform procedures for reporting convictions described in  
9 this paragraph.

10 (c) If a vehicle is not registered, the owner of the vehicle may not knowingly allow  
11 the vehicle to be driven on a highway in this State.

12 (d) (1) If the required registration fee for a vehicle has not been paid, a person  
13 may not drive the vehicle on a highway in this State.

14 (2) **A POLICE OFFICER MAY ENFORCE THIS SUBSECTION ONLY AS A**  
15 **SECONDARY ACTION WHEN THE POLICE OFFICER DETAINS A DRIVER OF A MOTOR**  
16 **VEHICLE FOR A SUSPECTED VIOLATION OF ANOTHER PROVISION OF THE CODE.**

17 (e) (1) If the required registration fee for a vehicle has not been paid, the owner  
18 of the vehicle may not knowingly allow the vehicle to be driven on a highway in this State.

19 (2) **A POLICE OFFICER MAY ENFORCE THIS SUBSECTION ONLY AS A**  
20 **SECONDARY ACTION WHEN THE POLICE OFFICER DETAINS A DRIVER OF A MOTOR**  
21 **VEHICLE FOR A SUSPECTED VIOLATION OF ANOTHER PROVISION OF THE CODE.**

22 (f) If the registration of a vehicle is canceled, a person may not drive the vehicle  
23 on a highway in this State.

24 (g) If the registration of a vehicle is canceled, the owner of the vehicle may not  
25 knowingly allow the vehicle to be driven on a highway in this State.

26 (h) If the registration of a vehicle is suspended, a person may not drive the vehicle  
27 on a highway in this State.

28 (i) If the registration of a vehicle is suspended, the owner of the vehicle may not  
29 knowingly allow the vehicle to be driven on a highway in this State.

30 (j) If the registration of a vehicle is revoked, a person may not drive the vehicle  
31 on a highway in this State.

1 (k) If the registration of a vehicle is revoked, the owner of the vehicle may not  
2 knowingly allow the vehicle to be driven on a highway in this State.

3 13-411.

4 (a) On a vehicle for which two registration plates are required, one plate shall be  
5 attached on the front and the other on the rear of the vehicle.

6 (b) On a vehicle for which one registration plate is required, the plate shall be  
7 attached on the:

8 (1) Front of the vehicle for a Class F (tractor) vehicle; and

9 (2) Rear of the vehicle for every other vehicle.

10 (c) (1) At all times, each registration plate shall be:

11 (i) Maintained free from foreign materials, including registration  
12 plate covers as defined in § 13-411.1 of this subtitle, and in a condition to be clearly legible;  
13 and

14 (ii) Securely fastened to the vehicle for which it is issued:

15 1. In a horizontal position;

16 2. In a manner that prevents the plate from swinging; and

17 3. In a place and position to be clearly visible.

18 (2) For a violation involving the placement of an object framing or  
19 bordering the edges of a registration plate, a police officer may enforce this subsection only  
20 as a secondary action when the police officer detains a driver of a motor vehicle for a  
21 suspected violation of another provision of the Code.

22 (d) Except as otherwise expressly permitted by the Maryland Vehicle Law, as to  
23 any vehicle required to be registered under this title, a person may not drive the vehicle on  
24 any highway in this State, unless there is attached to the vehicle and displayed on it, as  
25 required in this title:

26 (1) A registration plate or plates issued for the vehicle by the  
27 Administration for the current registration period; and

28 (2) Any validation tab issued for the vehicle under this subtitle.

29 (e) Except as otherwise expressly permitted by the Maryland Vehicle Law, as to  
30 any vehicle required to be registered under this title, the owner of the vehicle may not

1 permit the vehicle to be driven on any highway in this State, unless there is attached to  
2 and displayed on the vehicle, as required in this title:

3 (1) A registration plate or plates issued by the Administration for the  
4 current registration period; and

5 (2) Any validation tab issued for the vehicle under this subtitle.

6 (f) (1) Except as otherwise expressly permitted by the Maryland Vehicle Law,  
7 a vehicle used or driven in this State may not display on either its front or rear any expired  
8 registration plate issued by any state.

9 (2) **A POLICE OFFICER MAY ENFORCE THIS SUBSECTION ONLY AS A**  
10 **SECONDARY ACTION WHEN THE POLICE OFFICER DETAINS A DRIVER OF A MOTOR**  
11 **VEHICLE FOR A SUSPECTED VIOLATION OF ANOTHER PROVISION OF THE CODE.**

12 (g) Except as otherwise expressly permitted by the Maryland Vehicle Law, a  
13 person may not display or permit to be displayed on any vehicle used or driven in this State  
14 any registration plate issued for another vehicle or to a person other than the owner of the  
15 vehicle.

16 (h) (1) A vehicle registered as a historic or antique vehicle (Class L) in this  
17 State or in another state, when used or driven in this State, may display vintage  
18 registration plates as an indication of the historic or antique nature of the vehicle. Except  
19 as provided in paragraph (2) of this subsection, the place on the vehicle provided for the  
20 display of registration plates may only be used for the display of current registration plates  
21 in accordance with subsections (a) through (c) of this section, and any vintage registration  
22 plates which are used shall be displayed elsewhere on the vehicle.

23 (2) If the Administration authorizes the display of vintage registration  
24 plates in lieu of current registration plates, as provided in § 13-936.1 of this title, the  
25 vintage registration plates shall be displayed as required under subsections (a) through (c)  
26 of this section. However, the current registration plates shall be kept in the vehicle at all  
27 times.

28 (i) It is the duty of every police officer to report to the Administration all vehicles  
29 operated in violation of this section. The Administration shall verify whether the owner of  
30 a reported vehicle has complied with this section.

31 (J) **A POLICE OFFICER MAY NOT STOP A MOTOR VEHICLE FOR DISPLAYING**  
32 **AN EXPIRED REGISTRATION BEFORE THE FIRST DAY OF THE FOURTH MONTH**  
33 **FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL EXPIRATION DATE OF THE REGISTRATION.**

34 13-701.

1 (a) Except as otherwise provided in this title, as to any vehicle required to be  
2 registered under this title, a person may not drive the vehicle on any highway in this State,  
3 unless the vehicle displays current registration plates and a current registration card is  
4 carried as required in this title.

5 (b) Except as otherwise provided in this title, as to any vehicle required to be  
6 registered under this title, an owner of the vehicle may not knowingly permit the vehicle to  
7 be driven on a highway in this State, unless the vehicle displays current registration plates  
8 and a current registration card is carried as required in this title.

9 (c) (1) **A POLICE OFFICER MAY ENFORCE THIS SECTION ONLY AS A**  
10 **SECONDARY ACTION WHEN THE POLICE OFFICER DETAINS A DRIVER OF A MOTOR**  
11 **VEHICLE FOR A SUSPECTED VIOLATION OF ANOTHER PROVISION OF THE CODE.**

12 (2) **A POLICE OFFICER MAY NOT STOP A MOTOR VEHICLE FOR**  
13 **DISPLAYING AN EXPIRED REGISTRATION BEFORE THE FIRST DAY OF THE FOURTH**  
14 **MONTH FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL EXPIRATION DATE OF THE REGISTRATION.**

15 21-1111.

16 (a) A person may not drop, throw, or place on a highway any glass bottle, glass,  
17 nails, tacks, wire, cans, or any other substance likely to injure any person, animal, or  
18 vehicle on the highway.

19 (b) Any person who drops, throws, or places or permits to be dropped, thrown, or  
20 placed on a highway any destructive, hazardous, or injurious material immediately shall  
21 remove it or cause it to be removed.

22 (c) Any person removing a wrecked or damaged vehicle from a highway also shall  
23 remove from the highway any glass or other injurious substance dropped from the vehicle.

24 (d) A person may not throw, dump, discharge, or deposit any trash, junk, or other  
25 refuse on any highway or public bridge or in any public waters.

26 (e) The owner of the vehicle, if present in the vehicle, or, in his absence, the driver  
27 of the vehicle is presumed to be responsible for any violation of this section, if:

28 (1) The violation is caused by an occupant of the vehicle;

29 (2) The vehicle has two or more occupants; and

30 (3) It cannot be determined which occupant is the violator.

31 (f) A violation of this section is considered a moving violation for purposes of §  
32 16-402 of this article.

1           **(G) A POLICE OFFICER MAY ENFORCE THIS SECTION ONLY AS A SECONDARY**  
2 **ACTION WHEN THE POLICE OFFICER DETAINS A DRIVER OF A MOTOR VEHICLE FOR**  
3 **A SUSPECTED VIOLATION OF ANOTHER PROVISION OF THE CODE.**

4 22-203.

5           **(b) (1)** Every motor vehicle, other than a motorcycle, shall be equipped with at  
6 least two headlamps with at least one on each side of the front of the motor vehicle, which  
7 headlamps shall emit white light and comply with the requirements and limitations set  
8 forth in this title.

9           **(2) IF A MOTOR VEHICLE, OTHER THAN A MOTORCYCLE, HAS AT**  
10 **LEAST ONE WORKING HEADLAMP ON THE FRONT OF THE VEHICLE THAT EMITS**  
11 **WHITE LIGHT AND COMPLIES WITH THE REQUIREMENTS AND LIMITATIONS SET**  
12 **FORTH IN THIS TITLE, A POLICE OFFICER MAY ENFORCE THIS SUBSECTION ONLY AS**  
13 **A SECONDARY ACTION WHEN THE POLICE OFFICER DETAINS A DRIVER OF THE**  
14 **MOTOR VEHICLE FOR A SUSPECTED VIOLATION OF ANOTHER PROVISION OF THE**  
15 **CODE.**

16 22-204.

17           **(f) (1)** Either a tail lamp or a separate lamp shall be constructed and placed  
18 to illuminate, with a white light, the rear registration plate and render it clearly legible  
19 from a distance of 50 feet to the rear. Any tail lamp or tail lamps, together with any separate  
20 lamp or lamps for illuminating the rear registration plate, shall be wired to be lighted  
21 whenever the head lamps or auxiliary driving lamps are lighted.

22           **(2) A POLICE OFFICER MAY ENFORCE THIS SUBSECTION ONLY AS A**  
23 **SECONDARY ACTION WHEN THE POLICE OFFICER DETAINS A DRIVER OF A MOTOR**  
24 **VEHICLE FOR A SUSPECTED VIOLATION OF ANOTHER PROVISION OF THE CODE.**

25 22-403.

26           **(a)** Every motor vehicle shall be equipped with at least one mirror located to  
27 reflect to the driver a view of the highway for a distance of at least 200 feet to the rear of  
28 the vehicle.

29           **(b)** Every motor vehicle registered in this State shall be equipped with an outside  
30 mirror on the driver's side located to reflect to the driver a view of the highway for a distance  
31 of at least 200 feet to the rear of the vehicle and along the driver's side of the vehicle. This  
32 subsection does not apply to motorcycles, which are governed by subsection (c) of this  
33 section.

34           **(c)** Every motorcycle shall be equipped with two rearview mirrors, one each  
35 attached to the right and left handlebars, which shall meet applicable federal motor vehicle  
36 safety standards.

1 (d) (1) Where the view through the inside rearview mirror is obstructed, two  
2 outside rearview mirrors are required.

3 (2) A POLICE OFFICER MAY ENFORCE THIS SUBSECTION ONLY AS A  
4 SECONDARY ACTION WHEN THE POLICE OFFICER DETAINS A DRIVER OF A MOTOR  
5 VEHICLE FOR A SUSPECTED VIOLATION OF ANOTHER PROVISION OF THE CODE.

6 22–406.

7 (i) (1) Except as provided in paragraph (4) of this subsection, a person may  
8 not operate a vehicle registered under § 13–912, § 13–913, § 13–917, or § 13–937 of this  
9 article on a highway in this State if:

10 (i) In the case of a vehicle registered under § 13–912 of this article,  
11 there is affixed to any window of the vehicle any tinting materials added to the window  
12 after manufacture of the vehicle that do not allow a light transmittance through the window  
13 of at least 35%; and

14 (ii) In the case of a vehicle registered under § 13–913, § 13–917, or §  
15 13–937 of this article, there is affixed to any window to the immediate right or left of the  
16 driver any window tinting materials added after manufacture of the vehicle that do not  
17 allow a light transmittance through the window of at least 35%.

18 (2) If a police officer observes that a vehicle is being operated in violation  
19 of paragraph (1) of this subsection, the officer may [stop the driver of the vehicle and, in  
20 addition to]:

21 (I) ENFORCE PARAGRAPH (1) OF THIS SUBSECTION ONLY AS A  
22 SECONDARY ACTION WHEN THE POLICE OFFICER DETAINS A DRIVER OF A MOTOR  
23 VEHICLE FOR A SUSPECTED VIOLATION OF ANOTHER PROVISION OF THE CODE; AND

24 (II) 1. ISSUE a citation charging the driver with the offense[,  
25 issue]; OR

26 2. ISSUE to the driver a safety equipment repair order in  
27 accordance with the provisions of § 23–105 of this article.

28 SECTION 3. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That Section 2 of this Act shall be  
29 construed to apply retroactively and shall be applied to and interpreted to affect any  
30 proceedings not finally adjudicated on the effective date of this Act.

31 SECTION 4. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect  
32 October 1, 2026.

# **SB0055\_Motor\_Vehicles\_Police\_Stops\_Secondary\_Enfor**

Uploaded by: Rebecca Turner

Position: FAV



**TESTIMONY FOR SB0055**  
**Motor Vehicles – Police Stops - Secondary Enforcement and**  
**Excludable Evidence**

**Bill Sponsor:** Senator Sydnor  
**Committee:** Judicial Proceedings  
**Organization Submitting:** N/A  
**Person Submitting:** Rebecca Turner  
**Position:** FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in favor of SB0055.

As legislators, the General Assembly is asked to problem solve. Finding a good solution to a pervasive problem is a critical element of serving the people of Maryland.

We have seen video of police stops of people with brown skin for no reason other than the fact that they are brown. It frightens everyone when enforcement is random. This bill strives to put guardrails around the process of police stops to ensure that they are 'for cause'. This is an excellent way to resolve a problem without creating new problems.

The first thing required here is a simple documentation of the reason for the stop on the citation or police report resulting from the stop. Failure to comply with this simple reporting requirement may be grounds for administrative disciplinary action and may serve as the basis for exclusion of evidence under the exclusionary rule. It also prohibits the officer from preventing a citizen from recording the stop.

Finally, it takes away a lot of the small things that could be used as 'reasons' for the stop, such as littering, non-working headlamps or tail lights

unless those reasons are secondary to the main purpose of the stop. Additionally, expired registrations (unless they are more than 4 months expired) can't be used as the main purpose of the stop.

In other words, the stop must be made for a more important reason, such as a moving violation or a suspended or cancelled registration.

We support this bill and recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.

# **Maryland SB 55 Judiciary Proceedings Committee Test**

Uploaded by: Scarlet Neath

Position: FAV



NYU School of Law  
40 Washington Square South  
New York, NY 10012

E: [legislation@policingproject.org](mailto:legislation@policingproject.org)  
P: 212.992.6950  
W: [policingproject.org](http://policingproject.org)

January 16, 2026

**TESTIMONY OF THE POLICING PROJECT AT NYU SCHOOL OF LAW  
TO THE SENATE JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS COMMITTEE OF THE STATE OF MARYLAND  
IN SUPPORT OF S.B. 55**

Dear Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Committee Members:

The Policing Project is an organization dedicated to ensuring democratic accountability in policing by giving communities and their elected representatives a voice in how law enforcement agencies operate. We believe that by democratically setting expectations *before* police act, instead of *after* something has gone wrong, we can achieve meaningful public safety for all people. We have advised police departments and elected officials in more than a dozen jurisdictions to create and adopt such policies in the traffic enforcement context. We have also conducted research on the public safety impacts of reducing low-risk traffic stops and drafted model state-level legislation to reduce pretextual traffic stops.

S.B. 55 is a common-sense measure that limits police enforcement of a series of non-safety violations, such as expired registrations, excessive window tinting, an unilluminated license plate, or a missing headlight or taillight. [At least 17](#) state or local governments have passed measures to limit similar non-safety stops, including Virginia, Connecticut, and Oregon. We urge this Committee to support this important measure, which will make Maryland's roads safer and more just.

Data from Maryland confirms what has been shown across the country: traffic stops are frequently made for low-level violations unrelated to road safety. These non-safety stops are often initiated because of goals unrelated to road safety: either as a pretext to conduct a search to find crime, or to increase the local government's revenue by writing more total citations. But neither of these reasons contribute to effective policing. Evidence is clear that randomly stumbling upon serious crime during a traffic stop is a rarity. And relying upon quantity of traffic tickets in order to reward performance or generate revenue, no matter their relevance to crash outcomes, incentivizes policing for profit rather than safety.

Non-safety stops do little to make roadways safer, use limited police resources inefficiently, fuel racial discrimination, and undermine public safety. In [2024](#), about 54% of traffic stops in Maryland were made for reasons related to equipment, license, or registration violations, while just 12% were made for moving violations or reckless driving. But Maryland's Highway Safety Office [reports](#) that speed, aggressive driving, distracted driving, and impaired driving are the major contributors to crashes and fatalities – not dark window tint or driving without an illuminated license plate. By spending so much of their limited time on minor, non-safety violations, Maryland officers are missing the opportunity to stop truly dangerous behaviors on the road.

Traffic policing that relies on low-level stops is inefficient in other ways, as well. Traffic stops for non-safety offenses are less likely to result in an arrest made than stops related to the leading causes of crashes: speeding and dangerous driving. In addition, the pretextual motivations for many of these stops lead to inefficiency. Unsurprisingly, when police search for crimes based on a specific reason, rather than an unfounded or biased hunch, they are [more successful](#) in that endeavor.

Focusing traffic enforcement on non-safety stops also results in disproportionately policing drivers of color. Stops for non-safety equipment and paperwork reasons in Maryland, as well as throughout the country, have greater racial disparities. Coupled with the fact that non-safety stops are [more likely](#) to end in police use of force than safety stops, this signals an urgent need for change. Indeed, a [report](#) found that racial disparities in Montgomery County Police Department traffic stops persisted or worsened between 2018 and 2022.

Low-level traffic stops don't move the needle on roadway safety, and they don't move the needle on broader public safety, either. The Policing Project [studied](#) traffic stops in Nashville, Tennessee where just 0.7% of stops resulted in an arrest for something that might have an impact on future crime. The Nashville Police Department reduced its traffic stops for non-moving violations significantly, with crime rates remaining unchanged. In addition, people who have recently been stopped are significantly [less likely](#) to report neighborhood problems to law enforcement.

Other jurisdictions—such as [Fayetteville, North Carolina](#), [St. Paul, Minnesota](#), [Philadelphia](#), [Los Angeles](#), [Seattle](#), and several [Connecticut cities](#)—have shown that limiting traffic stops for non-safety offenses is associated with reduced racial disparities in police contact, increased arrests for moving violations, fewer serious crashes, and either unchanged or reduced crime rates.

By creating clear guidelines on how and when officers may conduct traffic stops, S.B. 55 makes significant strides towards more effective and equitable policing. We thank the Committee and the Chair for their consideration of this important piece of legislation.

**SB 55\_FAV\_ACLUMD.pdf**

Uploaded by: Sebastian Brown

Position: FAV



## Testimony for the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

January 20, 2026

### SB 55 – Safer Traffic Stops for All (Motor Vehicles – Police Stops - Secondary Enforcement and Excludable Evidence)

#### FAVORABLE

SEBASTIAN BROWN  
PUBLIC POLICY ADVOCACY  
STRATEGIST

AMERICAN CIVIL  
LIBERTIES UNION  
OF MARYLAND

3600 CLIPPER MILL ROAD  
SUITE 200  
BALTIMORE, MD 21211  
T/410-889-8555  
F/410-366-7838

WWW.ACLU-MD.ORG

OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS  
COREY STOTTLEMYER  
PRESIDENT

DANA VICKERS SHELLEY  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

ANDREW FREEMAN  
GENERAL COUNSEL

The ACLU of Maryland urges a favorable report on SB 55 which seeks to make several minor non-safety-related traffic laws secondary violations, prohibiting them from being the sole reason for a traffic stop. Minor traffic violations include equipment violations like driving without an illuminated license plate, excessive window tints, and vehicle registration issues. SB 55 will help reduce risks of unnecessary traffic stops, decrease racial disparities in traffic enforcement and improve public safety.

Maryland has a long history of racial disparities in traffic enforcement. Statewide data from 2023 reveals that Black drivers constitute at least 43% of all vehicle traffic stops, despite only making up 30% of the state's population. Additionally, Black drivers are over four times more likely to be subjected to a warrantless vehicle search than white drivers. These statistics indicate significant racial bias in traffic enforcement and reflect that Maryland is no exception to the national trend.<sup>2</sup>

Race-based disparities in the enforcement of low-level traffic infractions are frequently the result of pretextual traffic stops in which officers implicitly or explicitly hope that stopping a driver will yield evidence of criminal conduct, even though they don't have an

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<sup>1</sup> *Race-Based Traffic Stop Data Dashboard*. Maryland Governor's Office of Crime Prevention and Policy.  
<https://app.powerbigov.us/view?r=eyJrIjoiZTBhNDYzMTMtZTRhMy00OWRkLTk3ZGI0ZmJlMGQ2OTRjMDQzIiwidCI6IjYwYWZlOWUyLTQ5Y2QtNDliMS04ODUxLTY0ZGYwMjc2YTJlOCJ9&pageName=ReportSection>

<sup>2</sup> Frank R. Baumgartner et al., *Racial Disparities in Traffic Stop Outcomes*, 9 Duke Forum for Law & Social Change 21, 22 (2017)

independent legal basis to make a criminal stop. This often leads police to prolonged stops by questioning drivers and pressuring them to consent to searches of their cars. As such, minor, non-safety related traffic stops pose serious risks to individuals' constitutional rights.

Pretextual traffic stops—which occur “on a massive scale,” are also dangerous and sometimes tragic.<sup>3</sup> Philando Castille, for example, was fatally shot after being stopped for a broken taillight. Tyre Nicholas was fatally beaten after police stopped him for a traffic violation that recordings indicated never occurred.<sup>4</sup> Here in Maryland in 2019, Demonte Ward-Blake was beaten by PGPD officers and paralyzed from the waist down after being stopped for an expired registration. Black men are twice as likely as white men to be killed by police.<sup>5</sup> Considering stops for equipment and registration-related violations alone make up about 44% of all traffic stops, avoiding these non-safety related traffic stops would have a significant impact on reducing unnecessary police interactions that may lead to tragedy.<sup>6</sup>

Moreover, these non-safety related traffic stops are not a necessary or effective crime-fighting tool. Police resources are better spent directed towards solving violent crime and addressing serious public safety risks. In 2022, 64 percent of violent crimes reported to police in Maryland were not solved.<sup>7</sup> Additionally, available data and various examples from other states show that reprioritizing traffic stops allows police to focus on dangerous driving, increasing traffic safety.

For the aforementioned reasons, the ACLU of Maryland urges a favorable report on SB 55.

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<sup>3</sup> United States v. Cole, 21 F.4th 421, 437 (7th Cir. 2021) (Hamilton, J., dissenting)

<sup>4</sup> Loller, T., Mattise, J., & Sainz, A. (2023, February 9). *Tyre Nichols documents: Officer never explained stop to him*. AP News. <https://apnews.com/article/law-enforcement-tyre-nichols-memphis-3c20513e067d2f55786d8f42cf98b3c6>

<sup>5</sup> Frank Edwards et al., Risk of Being Killed by Police Use of Force in the United States by Age, Race-Ethnicity, and Sex, 116 Proc. Nat' Acad. Scis. 16793, 16794 (2019)

<sup>6</sup> *Race-Based Traffic Stop Data Dashboard*. Maryland Governor's Office of Crime Prevention and Policy. <https://app.powerbigov.us/view?r=eyJrIjoiaZTBhNDYzMTMtZTRhMy00OWRkLTk3ZGIzMjJmQzQ2OTRjMDQzIiwidCI6IjYwYWZlOWUyLTQ5Y2QtNDliMS04ODUxLTY0ZGYwMjc2YTJlOCl9&pageName=ReportSection>

<sup>7</sup> Dardeau, M & Salomon, N. (2024, January 23). *Violent Crime and Accountability Trends in Maryland*. Justice Center: The Council of State Governments. [https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/meeting\\_material/2024/jpr%20-%20133505047428207622%20-%20CSG%20Presentation.pdf](https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/meeting_material/2024/jpr%20-%20133505047428207622%20-%20CSG%20Presentation.pdf)

# **SB 55 Sponsor Amendment**

Uploaded by: Ian Miller

Position: FWA



**SB0055/833223/1**

AMENDMENTS  
PREPARED  
BY THE  
DEPT. OF LEGISLATIVE  
SERVICES

19 JAN 26  
14:59:10

BY: Senator Sydnor  
(To be offered in the Judicial Proceedings Committee)

AMENDMENTS TO SENATE BILL 55  
(First Reading File Bill)

AMENDMENT NO. 1

On page 1, in line 18, strike "21-1111,".

AMENDMENT NO. 2

On pages 6 and 7, strike in their entirety the lines beginning with line 15 on page 6 through line 3 on page 7, inclusive.

# **SB 55 Sponsor Amendment Reprint**

Uploaded by: Ian Miller

Position: FWA

# SENATE BILL 55

R5, E2

(PRE-FILED)

6lr1537  
CF HB 81

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By: **Senator Sydnor**

Requested: October 31, 2025

Introduced and read first time: January 14, 2026

Assigned to: Judicial Proceedings

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## A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Motor Vehicles – Police Stops – Secondary Enforcement and Excludable**  
3 **Evidence**

4 FOR the purpose of requiring a police officer to document all reasons for a traffic stop or  
5 other stop on a citation or police report resulting from the stop; establishing that  
6 certain evidence obtained during a traffic stop or other stop in violation of certain  
7 provisions of law may be excluded as evidence in certain proceedings; authorizing a  
8 police officer to enforce certain provisions of the Maryland Vehicle Law only as a  
9 secondary action; applying certain provisions of this Act retroactively; and generally  
10 relating to police stops.

11 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,  
12 Article – Criminal Procedure  
13 Section 2–109  
14 Annotated Code of Maryland  
15 (2025 Replacement Volume)

16 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,  
17 Article – Transportation  
18 Section 13–401, 13–411, 13–701, ~~21–1111~~, 22–203(b), 22–204(f), 22–403, and  
19 22–406(i)(2)  
20 Annotated Code of Maryland  
21 (2020 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

22 BY repealing and reenacting, without amendments,  
23 Article – Transportation  
24 Section 22–406(i)(1)  
25 Annotated Code of Maryland  
26 (2020 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)



3      **REPRINT OF SENATE BILL 55 as amended by SB0055/833223/1   01/19/26 at 2:58 PM**

1           (a)      This section applies to any vehicle required to be registered under this title.

2           (b)      (1)     If a vehicle is not registered, a person may not drive the vehicle on a  
3 highway in this State.

4                   (2)     (i)     If a person is convicted of a violation of this subsection that  
5 involved the use of an off-highway recreational vehicle on a highway, the court shall notify  
6 the Administration of the violation.

7                           (ii)    The Chief Judge of the District Court, in conjunction with the  
8 Administration, shall establish uniform procedures for reporting convictions described in  
9 this paragraph.

10          (c)      If a vehicle is not registered, the owner of the vehicle may not knowingly allow  
11 the vehicle to be driven on a highway in this State.

12          (d)      **(1)**     If the required registration fee for a vehicle has not been paid, a person  
13 may not drive the vehicle on a highway in this State.

14                   **(2)**     **A POLICE OFFICER MAY ENFORCE THIS SUBSECTION ONLY AS A**  
15 **SECONDARY ACTION WHEN THE POLICE OFFICER DETAINS A DRIVER OF A MOTOR**  
16 **VEHICLE FOR A SUSPECTED VIOLATION OF ANOTHER PROVISION OF THE CODE.**

17          (e)      **(1)**     If the required registration fee for a vehicle has not been paid, the owner  
18 of the vehicle may not knowingly allow the vehicle to be driven on a highway in this State.

19                   **(2)**     **A POLICE OFFICER MAY ENFORCE THIS SUBSECTION ONLY AS A**  
20 **SECONDARY ACTION WHEN THE POLICE OFFICER DETAINS A DRIVER OF A MOTOR**  
21 **VEHICLE FOR A SUSPECTED VIOLATION OF ANOTHER PROVISION OF THE CODE.**

22          (f)      If the registration of a vehicle is canceled, a person may not drive the vehicle  
23 on a highway in this State.

24          (g)      If the registration of a vehicle is canceled, the owner of the vehicle may not  
25 knowingly allow the vehicle to be driven on a highway in this State.

26          (h)      If the registration of a vehicle is suspended, a person may not drive the vehicle  
27 on a highway in this State.

28          (i)      If the registration of a vehicle is suspended, the owner of the vehicle may not  
29 knowingly allow the vehicle to be driven on a highway in this State.

30          (j)      If the registration of a vehicle is revoked, a person may not drive the vehicle  
31 on a highway in this State.

4     **REPRINT OF SENATE BILL 55 as amended by SB0055/833223/1   01/19/26 at 2:58 PM**

1           (k)     If the registration of a vehicle is revoked, the owner of the vehicle may not  
2 knowingly allow the vehicle to be driven on a highway in this State.

3 13-411.

4           (a)     On a vehicle for which two registration plates are required, one plate shall be  
5 attached on the front and the other on the rear of the vehicle.

6           (b)     On a vehicle for which one registration plate is required, the plate shall be  
7 attached on the:

8                 (1)     Front of the vehicle for a Class F (tractor) vehicle; and

9                 (2)     Rear of the vehicle for every other vehicle.

10          (c)     (1)     At all times, each registration plate shall be:

11                     (i)     Maintained free from foreign materials, including registration  
12 plate covers as defined in § 13-411.1 of this subtitle, and in a condition to be clearly legible;  
13 and

14                     (ii)    Securely fastened to the vehicle for which it is issued:

15                         1.     In a horizontal position;

16                         2.     In a manner that prevents the plate from swinging; and

17                         3.     In a place and position to be clearly visible.

18                 (2)     For a violation involving the placement of an object framing or  
19 bordering the edges of a registration plate, a police officer may enforce this subsection only  
20 as a secondary action when the police officer detains a driver of a motor vehicle for a  
21 suspected violation of another provision of the Code.

22          (d)     Except as otherwise expressly permitted by the Maryland Vehicle Law, as to  
23 any vehicle required to be registered under this title, a person may not drive the vehicle on  
24 any highway in this State, unless there is attached to the vehicle and displayed on it, as  
25 required in this title:

26                 (1)     A registration plate or plates issued for the vehicle by the  
27 Administration for the current registration period; and

28                 (2)     Any validation tab issued for the vehicle under this subtitle.

29          (e)     Except as otherwise expressly permitted by the Maryland Vehicle Law, as to  
30 any vehicle required to be registered under this title, the owner of the vehicle may not

5       **REPRINT OF SENATE BILL 55 as amended by SB0055/833223/1   01/19/26 at 2:58 PM**

1 permit the vehicle to be driven on any highway in this State, unless there is attached to  
2 and displayed on the vehicle, as required in this title:

3           (1)     A registration plate or plates issued by the Administration for the  
4 current registration period; and

5           (2)     Any validation tab issued for the vehicle under this subtitle.

6           (f)     **(1)**     Except as otherwise expressly permitted by the Maryland Vehicle Law,  
7 a vehicle used or driven in this State may not display on either its front or rear any expired  
8 registration plate issued by any state.

9           **(2)     A POLICE OFFICER MAY ENFORCE THIS SUBSECTION ONLY AS A**  
10 **SECONDARY ACTION WHEN THE POLICE OFFICER DETAINS A DRIVER OF A MOTOR**  
11 **VEHICLE FOR A SUSPECTED VIOLATION OF ANOTHER PROVISION OF THE CODE.**

12          (g)     Except as otherwise expressly permitted by the Maryland Vehicle Law, a  
13 person may not display or permit to be displayed on any vehicle used or driven in this State  
14 any registration plate issued for another vehicle or to a person other than the owner of the  
15 vehicle.

16          (h)     (1)     A vehicle registered as a historic or antique vehicle (Class L) in this  
17 State or in another state, when used or driven in this State, may display vintage  
18 registration plates as an indication of the historic or antique nature of the vehicle. Except  
19 as provided in paragraph (2) of this subsection, the place on the vehicle provided for the  
20 display of registration plates may only be used for the display of current registration plates  
21 in accordance with subsections (a) through (c) of this section, and any vintage registration  
22 plates which are used shall be displayed elsewhere on the vehicle.

23          (2)     If the Administration authorizes the display of vintage registration  
24 plates in lieu of current registration plates, as provided in § 13-936.1 of this title, the  
25 vintage registration plates shall be displayed as required under subsections (a) through (c)  
26 of this section. However, the current registration plates shall be kept in the vehicle at all  
27 times.

28          (i)     It is the duty of every police officer to report to the Administration all vehicles  
29 operated in violation of this section. The Administration shall verify whether the owner of  
30 a reported vehicle has complied with this section.

31          **(J)     A POLICE OFFICER MAY NOT STOP A MOTOR VEHICLE FOR DISPLAYING**  
32 **AN EXPIRED REGISTRATION BEFORE THE FIRST DAY OF THE FOURTH MONTH**  
33 **FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL EXPIRATION DATE OF THE REGISTRATION.**

34 13-701.

6      **REPRINT OF SENATE BILL 55 as amended by SB0055/833223/1   01/19/26 at 2:58 PM**

1           (a)       Except as otherwise provided in this title, as to any vehicle required to be  
2 registered under this title, a person may not drive the vehicle on any highway in this State,  
3 unless the vehicle displays current registration plates and a current registration card is  
4 carried as required in this title.

5           (b)       Except as otherwise provided in this title, as to any vehicle required to be  
6 registered under this title, an owner of the vehicle may not knowingly permit the vehicle to  
7 be driven on a highway in this State, unless the vehicle displays current registration plates  
8 and a current registration card is carried as required in this title.

9           **(C)       (1)       A POLICE OFFICER MAY ENFORCE THIS SECTION ONLY AS A**  
10 **SECONDARY ACTION WHEN THE POLICE OFFICER DETAINS A DRIVER OF A MOTOR**  
11 **VEHICLE FOR A SUSPECTED VIOLATION OF ANOTHER PROVISION OF THE CODE.**

12           **(2)       A POLICE OFFICER MAY NOT STOP A MOTOR VEHICLE FOR**  
13 **DISPLAYING AN EXPIRED REGISTRATION BEFORE THE FIRST DAY OF THE FOURTH**  
14 **MONTH FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL EXPIRATION DATE OF THE REGISTRATION.**

15 ~~21-1111.~~

16           ~~(a)       A person may not drop, throw, or place on a highway any glass bottle, glass,~~  
17 ~~nails, tacks, wire, cans, or any other substance likely to injure any person, animal, or~~  
18 ~~vehicle on the highway.~~

19           ~~(b)       Any person who drops, throws, or places or permits to be dropped, thrown, or~~  
20 ~~placed on a highway any destructive, hazardous, or injurious material immediately shall~~  
21 ~~remove it or cause it to be removed.~~

22           ~~(c)       Any person removing a wrecked or damaged vehicle from a highway also shall~~  
23 ~~remove from the highway any glass or other injurious substance dropped from the vehicle.~~

24           ~~(d)       A person may not throw, dump, discharge, or deposit any trash, junk, or other~~  
25 ~~refuse on any highway or public bridge or in any public waters.~~

26           ~~(e)       The owner of the vehicle, if present in the vehicle, or, in his absence, the driver~~  
27 ~~of the vehicle is presumed to be responsible for any violation of this section, if:~~

28           ~~(1)       The violation is caused by an occupant of the vehicle;~~

29           ~~(2)       The vehicle has two or more occupants; and~~

30           ~~(3)       It cannot be determined which occupant is the violator.~~

31           ~~(f)       A violation of this section is considered a moving violation for purposes of §~~  
32 ~~16-402 of this article.~~

7 REPRINT OF SENATE BILL 55 as amended by SB0055/833223/1 01/19/26 at 2:58 PM

1 ~~(G) A POLICE OFFICER MAY ENFORCE THIS SECTION ONLY AS A SECONDARY~~  
2 ~~ACTION WHEN THE POLICE OFFICER DETAINS A DRIVER OF A MOTOR VEHICLE FOR~~  
3 ~~A SUSPECTED VIOLATION OF ANOTHER PROVISION OF THE CODE.~~

4 22-203.

5 (b) (1) Every motor vehicle, other than a motorcycle, shall be equipped with at  
6 least two headlamps with at least one on each side of the front of the motor vehicle, which  
7 headlamps shall emit white light and comply with the requirements and limitations set  
8 forth in this title.

9 (2) IF A MOTOR VEHICLE, OTHER THAN A MOTORCYCLE, HAS AT  
10 LEAST ONE WORKING HEADLAMP ON THE FRONT OF THE VEHICLE THAT EMITS  
11 WHITE LIGHT AND COMPLIES WITH THE REQUIREMENTS AND LIMITATIONS SET  
12 FORTH IN THIS TITLE, A POLICE OFFICER MAY ENFORCE THIS SUBSECTION ONLY AS  
13 A SECONDARY ACTION WHEN THE POLICE OFFICER DETAINS A DRIVER OF THE  
14 MOTOR VEHICLE FOR A SUSPECTED VIOLATION OF ANOTHER PROVISION OF THE  
15 CODE.

16 22-204.

17 (f) (1) Either a tail lamp or a separate lamp shall be constructed and placed  
18 to illuminate, with a white light, the rear registration plate and render it clearly legible  
19 from a distance of 50 feet to the rear. Any tail lamp or tail lamps, together with any separate  
20 lamp or lamps for illuminating the rear registration plate, shall be wired to be lighted  
21 whenever the head lamps or auxiliary driving lamps are lighted.

22 (2) A POLICE OFFICER MAY ENFORCE THIS SUBSECTION ONLY AS A  
23 SECONDARY ACTION WHEN THE POLICE OFFICER DETAINS A DRIVER OF A MOTOR  
24 VEHICLE FOR A SUSPECTED VIOLATION OF ANOTHER PROVISION OF THE CODE.

25 22-403.

26 (a) Every motor vehicle shall be equipped with at least one mirror located to  
27 reflect to the driver a view of the highway for a distance of at least 200 feet to the rear of  
28 the vehicle.

29 (b) Every motor vehicle registered in this State shall be equipped with an outside  
30 mirror on the driver's side located to reflect to the driver a view of the highway for a distance  
31 of at least 200 feet to the rear of the vehicle and along the driver's side of the vehicle. This  
32 subsection does not apply to motorcycles, which are governed by subsection (c) of this  
33 section.

34 (c) Every motorcycle shall be equipped with two rearview mirrors, one each  
35 attached to the right and left handlebars, which shall meet applicable federal motor vehicle  
36 safety standards.

8        **REPRINT OF SENATE BILL 55 as amended by SB0055/833223/1    01/19/26 at 2:58 PM**

1            (d)    **(1)**     Where the view through the inside rearview mirror is obstructed, two  
2 outside rearview mirrors are required.

3            **(2)**     **A POLICE OFFICER MAY ENFORCE THIS SUBSECTION ONLY AS A**  
4 **SECONDARY ACTION WHEN THE POLICE OFFICER DETAINS A DRIVER OF A MOTOR**  
5 **VEHICLE FOR A SUSPECTED VIOLATION OF ANOTHER PROVISION OF THE CODE.**

6 22-406.

7            (i)    (1)     Except as provided in paragraph (4) of this subsection, a person may  
8 not operate a vehicle registered under § 13-912, § 13-913, § 13-917, or § 13-937 of this  
9 article on a highway in this State if:

10            (i)    In the case of a vehicle registered under § 13-912 of this article,  
11 there is affixed to any window of the vehicle any tinting materials added to the window  
12 after manufacture of the vehicle that do not allow a light transmittance through the window  
13 of at least 35%; and

14            (ii)   In the case of a vehicle registered under § 13-913, § 13-917, or §  
15 13-937 of this article, there is affixed to any window to the immediate right or left of the  
16 driver any window tinting materials added after manufacture of the vehicle that do not  
17 allow a light transmittance through the window of at least 35%.

18            (2)     If a police officer observes that a vehicle is being operated in violation  
19 of paragraph (1) of this subsection, the officer may [stop the driver of the vehicle and, in  
20 addition to]:

21            **(i)**     **ENFORCE PARAGRAPH (1) OF THIS SUBSECTION ONLY AS A**  
22 **SECONDARY ACTION WHEN THE POLICE OFFICER DETAINS A DRIVER OF A MOTOR**  
23 **VEHICLE FOR A SUSPECTED VIOLATION OF ANOTHER PROVISION OF THE CODE; AND**

24            **(ii)**    **1.**     **ISSUE** a citation charging the driver with the offense[,  
25 issue]; **OR**

26            **2.**     **ISSUE** to the driver a safety equipment repair order in  
27 accordance with the provisions of § 23-105 of this article.

28        SECTION 3. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That Section 2 of this Act shall be  
29 construed to apply retroactively and shall be applied to and interpreted to affect any  
30 proceedings not finally adjudicated on the effective date of this Act.

31        SECTION 4. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect  
32 October 1, 2026.

# **Sydnor Final Testimony\_Senate Bill 55.pdf**

Uploaded by: Ian Miller

Position: FWA

**CHARLES E. SYDNOR III, ESQ.**  
*Legislative District 44*  
Baltimore County

DEPUTY MAJORITY WHIP

Judicial Proceedings Committee

Executive Nominations Committee

*Joint Committees*

Administrative, Executive, and  
Legislative Review

Children, Youth, and Families

Senate Chair, Legislative Ethics



James Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street, Room 216  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
410-841-3612  
800-492-7122 Ext. 3612  
Charles.Sydnor@senate.state.md.us

**THE SENATE OF MARYLAND**  
**ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401**

**Testimony for Senate Bill 55**  
**Motor Vehicles - Secondary Enforcement**  
**and Admissibility of Evidence**  
**Before the Judicial Proceeding Committee**  
**January 20, 2026**

Good afternoon, Chair Smith, and Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee,

Senate Bill 55 recategorizes several traffic violations from primary to secondary violations to prioritize safety and focus law enforcement resources where they are needed most. This reintroduction of last year's Senate Bill 292 has substantial changes that we have made as a result from extensive and ongoing conversations with key stakeholders and constituents. However, I first want to revisit my personal experience with a traffic stop that I first shared with this committee last year.

In 2019, I was pulled over with my entire family during a vacation in Virginia<sup>1</sup>. As the officer's lights flashed and I pulled over to the shoulder, my three girls (age 9, 10, and 13 at the time) asked "why did he stop you daddy? What did you do wrong? Are you going to jail?" The entire family shared my anxiety, as I rolled down the window. I thought about Philando Castile, and countless others who did not survive routine traffic stops. I've been pulled over before and it is stressful, but good officers can usually put a driver at ease with clear communication and respect. But this trooper was harsh. He was condescending. It felt as though he was attempting to emasculate me in front of my wife and kids. And what was it all for? Driving too slow in the left lane. I explained to the officer that I had seen a speed limit sign of 45, but he rudely told me that was only when the lights were flashing. This distressing experience left a mark on me. Not only did this unnecessary interaction have no public safety purpose, it made my entire family feel unsafe.

That same year after receiving a tip from a concerned citizen regarding traffic disparities, I set out to uncover the traffic stop data from Baltimore County. After some effort, the data was made available and it was stark. The data showed that Black drivers were 73% more likely to be stopped by the Baltimore County Police than white drivers. Black drivers made up 56.25% of traffic stops in 2018, while making up just 26.1% of the population.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [Driving too slow — a pretext for a Va. traffic stop – Baltimore Sun](#)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.wbalTV.com/article/work-group-racial-disparities-baltimore-county-police-traffic-stops/29669764>

It was this revelation that led to the creation of, and my service on, the Baltimore County's Equitable Policing Workgroup in 2020. Our Workgroup was organized to analyze available traffic stop data in Baltimore County and make recommendations on policies and practices on how to ensure equitable policing and bring greater transparency and accountability to department. In the Workgroup's *2023 Traffic Stop Deep Dive Report*, Baltimore County's Police Chief Robert McCullough has recognized the implementation of training programs including implicit bias, fair and impartial policing, active bystandership for law enforcement, de-escalation, and mindfulness.<sup>3</sup> These programs may have had an effect in conjunction with public scrutiny, considering that bias could be inferred in data between 2017 and 2019, but could not be inferred between 2020 and 2022, after their implementation. However, the disparities *after* traffic stops occur continue to persist.

The report stated "Black drivers are far more likely to have their person or vehicle searched for probable cause during a traffic stop, even though these stops are less likely to find contraband for Black drivers compared to white drivers." The report also found "that Hispanic drivers are issued citations at a higher rate than both Black and white drivers."

While I appreciate our chief's efforts and I believe he and his police force are likely the rule rather than the exception, it is these disparities that spur me to seek and introduce a legislative remedy. Data produced by the Equitable Policing Workgroup in 2024 has revealed that 56.2% of traffic stops involve Black drivers, despite making up 33.5% of the county's population. While some improvement has been made after accounting for population growth of the Black community, traffic stops remain significantly disproportionate. When looking at the data, that is an irrefutable fact.

Today, I am here to testify in support of Senate Bill 55, which would change the categorization of certain low-level traffic infractions from primary offenses to secondary for enforcement purposes.

When a law enforcement officer conducts a traffic stop, there are two categories that stops can fall into: primary and secondary violations.

Primary violations allow an officer to initiate a traffic stop because of an immediate risk to the safety of the driver and others on the road.<sup>4</sup> Most traffic violations, such as speeding, disobeying a traffic signal (running a red light, for example), or tailgating are considered primary violations. Secondary violations, in contrast, are more minor violations. Secondary violations can only be

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<sup>3</sup> [2023- Traffic Stop Deep Dive- Final Report](#)

<sup>4</sup> Specifically, a primary stop gives police officers the justification, "probable cause," or "reasonable suspicion" to pull over a driver. A traffic stop is lawful under the Fourth Amendment when there is probable cause to believe that the driver has committed a violation of the vehicle laws, *Brice v. State*, 225 Md. App. 666, 695-96 (2015) (citing *Whren*, 517 U.S. at 810), or when an officer has reasonable, articulable suspicion that "criminal activity may be afoot[.]" *Id.* (quoting *Terry v. Ohio*, 392 U.S. 1, 30 (1968)). *See also Lewis v. State*, 398 Md. 349, 362 (2007) (quoting *Delaware v. Prouse*, 440 U.S. 648, 650 (1979)) ("[A] traffic stop violates the Fourth Amendment where there is no reasonable suspicion that the car is being driven contrary to the laws governing the operation of motor vehicles or that either the car or any of its occupants is subject to seizure or detention in connection with the violation of any other applicable laws.").

investigated after a stop for a primary offense has occurred. An example of an existing secondary violation includes an item hanging from a rear-view mirror.

First, Senate Bill 55 adds non-safety-related infractions to the list of secondary violations in Maryland. Under Senate Bill 55, the following violations would be recategorized as secondary offenses:

- Driving with a registration plate expired for less than four months;
  - Displaying an expired registration;
  - Driving with only one white-light headlight;
  - Driving without an illuminated license plate;
  - Driving with one outside rearview mirror when the interior rearview mirror is obstructed;
- and
- Driving with excessive window tint.

In addition to this recategorization of offenses, the legislation requires officers to document the reasons for a traffic stop or other stop on any citation or police report resulting from the stop. If an officer fails to abide by this requirement, any evidence gathered in the stop may serve as a basis for exclusion under the exclusionary rule.

By shifting police traffic enforcement from making these types of stops to focusing on dangerous driving, jurisdictions can promote road safety and overall public safety, while advancing community trust in the police. The resources, time, and energy that go into traffic stops for non-safety reasons present a significant opportunity cost. It is far more important for the safety of our roads for our officers engaged in traffic enforcement to be focusing on dangerous behavior that can be life threatening such as reckless driving, speeding, running red lights, driving under the influence, or tailgating.

Additionally, when an officer pulls over a vehicle on a roadway or highway, they are placed at-risk by vehicles traveling at high speeds that are passing by, especially when their vision is obstructed by inclement weather or lack of daylight. In 2025, two Baltimore City police officers were hospitalized after being struck by a passing vehicle while attempting to conduct a traffic stop in the early morning.<sup>5</sup> In 2021, when the Maryland Chiefs of Police Association and the Maryland Sheriffs' Association opposed legislation I introduced called Know Your Rights Acts, they testified that traffic stops are “the most inherently dangerous activities in which police officers are involved.” But they can also be inherently dangerous for everyone else; especially for Black motorists.

When I introduced this bill last session, I told the committee that the legislation was “the beginning of a conversation” to address an indisputable problem of racial disparities in traffic stops. However, this bill raises important questions of how we can balance the need to reduce these police encounters with the need for safety on our roads. It has necessarily prompted a considerable and continuing conversation with law enforcement and constituents alike. And this dialogue has resulted in a variety of alterations to last year’s bill.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.wbalTV.com/article/baltimore-police-officers-struck-by-car-traffic-stop/63392849>

Provisions from last year's bill, including driving without a functional taillight or brake light and driving in a bus-only lane have been removed. It has also been specified that driving without an outside mirror will remain a primary offense when the interior mirror is also obstructed. Additionally, while the draft bill in front of you also includes recategorizing littering as secondary offense, I have with me an amendment to also remove that change from the bill as a result of these conversations.

In last year's hearings, law enforcement raised concerns that SB292 included language that officers could face disciplinary action for enforcing secondary offenses in the absence of a primary offense during a traffic stop and mandate that evidence gathered would be inadmissible in court. Consequently, we have elected to remove this language as well.

In conclusion, recategorizing non-safety related traffic stops— that are disproportionately enforced on Black and brown Marylanders— will enhance public safety by refocusing strained police resources on serious traffic offenses that threaten road safety and rebalancing police workload towards violent crime. Through our ongoing dialogue, we have significantly narrowed and altered this legislation from last year and have struck a strong and smart balance with equity and safety concerns. I urge a favorable report.

# **SB0055 Secondary Enforcement - Support if Amend Bi**

Uploaded by: Jed Weeks

Position: FWA



January 16, 2026

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

## **SUPPORT IF AMENDED: SB0055 Motor Vehicles - Secondary Enforcement and Admissibility of Evidence**

Bikemore, Baltimore City's livable streets advocacy organization representing more than 8,000 advocates and the 30% of Baltimoreans who lack access to a car, is writing to request amendments to SB0055.

We agree that the kind of traffic stop this legislation seeks to avoid is unsafe, endangering both drivers and police officers. We also recognize the demonstrated racially disparate nature of this kind of traffic stop. However, we have significant concerns with the legislation as drafted, and can only support the legislation with amendments.

We believe that a number of the violations that are being made secondary are of significant safety concern for vulnerable road users. Drivers operating vehicles without headlights and mirrors are less likely to see vulnerable road users. Crashes involving these safety violations disproportionately injure and kill Black Baltimoreans, specifically Black men.

This legislation also inadvertently sets up a protected class of driver. A bicyclist or pedestrian littering on the street or otherwise disobeying one of these laws can still be subject to a primary stop for that violation, while a driver cannot. We know that these laws are also used as pretext stops of bicyclists and pedestrians, and that those bicyclists and pedestrians subjected to these stops are also most often Black and likely even more socially vulnerable than someone who has the privilege of affording a car. **If this legislation moves forward, it should be amended where appropriate to include pedestrians and operators of other vehicles like bicycles.**

We believe this legislation may inadvertently disallow a better method of police enforcement for these kinds of violations: high visibility enforcement. As referenced in the Office of Public Defender's FAQ from last session, high visibility, DUI style checkpoints eliminate many of the problems with individual stops. Other countries utilize this style of stop for broader safety and registration checks, issuing repair or renewal orders instead of fines. **This legislation should be amended to make clear this style of enforcement shall be permitted as a primary enforcement mechanism for the listed violations.**

We believe that expanded automated enforcement, paired with scaled fines, payment plans, and other methods to equitably address the cost of fines can address many of these violations as well. However, there has been opposition by the sponsor of this legislation to usage of these alternative enforcement measures in the past.

**This legislation must be paired with authorization for jurisdictions to expand automated enforcement types and geographies.**

**Finally, local jurisdictions must be clearly granted the authority to boot and tow vehicles with expired registrations, illegal or obscured plates, and for significant unpaid automated enforcement tickets using their non-police traffic enforcement officers. A lack of clarity and authorization here means passage of this legislation alone will result in jurisdictions having no legal means to address these issues.**

We support the intent of this legislation. We believe that our concerns with this legislation can be addressed by incorporating our above feedback. And we believe with that feedback incorporated, safety for all road users in Maryland will be improved. But we can't support this legislation as drafted, and in isolation.

We urge the committee to incorporate our above recommendations if SB0055 moves forward.

Sincerely,



**Jed Weeks**

**Executive Director**

**Amendment Summary:**

- Replace “driver of motor vehicle” to include pedestrians and all other vehicle operators, including bicycles, play vehicles, and EPAMDs.
- Clearly permit high-visibility enforcement to conduct primary stops for these offenses.
- Authorize local jurisdictions to expand automated enforcement types and geographies.
- Make clear local jurisdictions have the authority to boot and tow vehicles using non-police traffic enforcement officers for expired registrations, fake tags, obscured tags, and unpaid automated enforcement citations.

# **Testimony in FWA of SB0055 - Motor Vehicles - Poli**

Uploaded by: Richard KAP Kaplowitz

Position: FWA

SB0055\_RichardKaplowitz\_FWA

01/20/2026

Richard Keith Kaplowitz  
Frederick, MD 21703-7134

**TESTIMONY ON SB#0055 - POSITION: FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS  
Motor Vehicles - Police Stops - Secondary Enforcement and Excludable Evidence**

**TO:** Chair Bartlett, Vice Chair Davis, and members of the Judiciary Committee

**FROM:** Richard Keith Kaplowitz

My name is Richard Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3, Frederick County. I am submitting this testimony in support of SB#/0055, **Motor Vehicles - Police Stops - Secondary Enforcement and Excludable Evidence**

The purpose of this bill is to requiring a police officer to document all reasons for a traffic stop or other stop on a citation or police report resulting from the stop; establishing that certain evidence obtained from a traffic stop or other stop in violation of certain provisions of law may be excluded as evidence in certain proceedings; authorizing a police officer to enforce certain provisions of the Maryland Vehicle Law only as a secondary action; and applying certain provisions of the Act retroactively.

It should be possible to create a form with a drop-down menu of reasons, especially those that have historically been used overwhelmingly against African Americans, to efficiently and quickly document reasons for a police officer stop, especially if it can be documented as a safety concern by the officer. Data collected can then be analyzed to determine patterns of police actions taken.

Based on the deprivations we see from ICE where people's papers are demanded and cars are broken into and persons seized I believe an amendment that includes DHS actions during a stop must be added to the bill. The collection of that data may permit prosecution of those agents who fail to protect constitutional and other legal rights of drivers from being violated.

These illegal stops are fully documented with information on what is and is not legal and actions a driver should take at [https://www.immigrantdefenseproject.org/wp-content/uploads/IDP\\_car\\_stops-FINAL-2.pdf](https://www.immigrantdefenseproject.org/wp-content/uploads/IDP_car_stops-FINAL-2.pdf)

**I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable with amendments report on SB0055.**

**2026 SB0055 Testimony against 2026-01-16.pdf**

Uploaded by: Alan Lang

Position: UNF

# Testimony Against SB0055

Honorable Senators

Please enter an unfavorable report for SB0055.

I do not support:

- requiring a police officer to document all reasons for a traffic stop or other stop on a citation or police report resulting from the stop;
- establishing that certain evidence obtained during a traffic stop or other stop in violation of certain provisions of law may be excluded as evidence in certain proceedings;
- authorizing a police officer to enforce certain provisions of the Maryland Vehicle Law only as a secondary action; and
- applying certain provisions of this Act retroactively (rarely a good idea).

According to this bill, the following infractions would no longer be a primary reason for the police to stop a driver on Maryland roads

1. Driving with expired tags
2. Driving with a non-working headlight
3. Driving with a non-working rear license plate light
4. Littering while driving
5. Driving with overly tinted windows

All of these issues were passed because of safety reasons.

I have been stopped for items 2 and 3 several times. In each case, I was unaware that these lights were out and I got them repaired. Although, I was concerned initially why I was being pulled over, once I understood the reason, I appreciated knowing that I had a safety issue to correct.

The police have a hard enough time enforcing the highway laws without being hampered by this bill. Those driving with expired tags may be criminals, including illegals, those without insurance, those with outstanding parking tickets who are barred from getting new stickers. Not making this a primary offense removes one of the main ways police have for detecting these law breakers.

Those without rear license plate lights makes enforcing item 1 more difficult.

How many people who litter are doing so while speeding? The State and counties incur great costs to remove dangerous and unsightly litter. It would be galling for the police to watch someone throw trash in front of them and know they cannot do anything because the driver was not committing a primary offense at the same time.

Finally, I believe the heavily tinted windows are a danger to the police as they cannot see in the cars and they should be ticketed when discovered before they are doing a primary offense.

## Testimony Against SB0055

What is worse about this bill is the administrative sanctions that would be imposed if a veteran police officer should forget that these offenses are no longer primary and pull someone over like they have done for years. This section is particularly onerous.

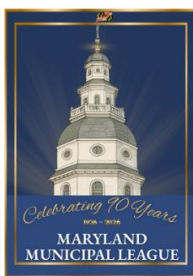
Please enter an unfavorable report for SB0055.

Alan Lang  
45 Marys Mount Road  
Harwood, Maryland 20776  
Legislative District 30B  
410-336-9745  
[Alanlang1@verizon.net](mailto:Alanlang1@verizon.net)  
January 16, 2026

**SB 55 - MML - UNFAV.pdf**

Uploaded by: Angelica Bailey Thupari

Position: UNF



## TESTIMONY

**COMMITTEE:** Senate Finance

**DATE:** January 20, 2026

**POSITION:** Unfavorable

**BILL:** SB 55

### **Motor Vehicles - Police Stops - Secondary Enforcement and Excludable Evidence**

The Maryland Municipal League (MML) respectfully **opposes** Senate Bill 55, which changes the protocols for law enforcement during traffic stops by designating a number of minor traffic infractions - including certain equipment violations, expired registrations, improper display of plates, and window tint infractions - as offenses that can only be enforced as secondary actions. This means officers may not stop a motorist solely for these reasons, but may issue citations for them only if a driver is already detained for another violation.

Over half of Maryland's municipalities have local police departments that rely on the ability to enforce these laws to ensure roadway safety and deter more serious criminal activity. Often, traffic stops for minor violations lead to the identification of larger crimes, such as stolen vehicles, drugs, or illegal weapons. Limiting our officers' ability to enforce these violations as primary offenses could make it more difficult to detect such activity or to address issues like unregistered vehicles, nonfunctional headlights, or excessive window tinting that may compromise road safety.

Additionally, local governments depend on fines and fees collected from traffic enforcement to help fund essential services. By reducing the opportunities for enforcement of certain violations, Senate Bill 55 could result in decreased municipal revenues and potentially undermine routine compliance with vehicle registration requirements, affecting revenues at both local and state levels.

For these reasons, and in the interest of maintaining the effectiveness of local law enforcement and ensuring public safety on Maryland's roads, the Maryland Municipal League respectfully requests an **unfavorable** report on Senate Bill 55.

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For more information relating to this piece of testimony, please contact:

Angelica Bailey Thupari: Director, Advocacy and Public Policy, [angelicab@mdmunicipal.org](mailto:angelicab@mdmunicipal.org)

*MML represents 88 municipal police departments and roughly 4,000 officers.*

## **SB55**

Uploaded by: James Randy Guy

Position: UNF

ST. MARY'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT  
**COMMISSIONERS OF  
ST. MARY'S COUNTY**



James R. Guy, President  
Michael R. Alderson, Jr., Commissioner  
Eric S. Colvin, Commissioner  
Michael L. Hewitt, Commissioner  
Scott R. Ostrow, Commissioner

**SB 55**  
**Motor Vehicles - Police Stops - Secondary Enforcement and Excludable  
Evidence**

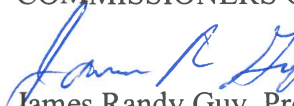
**COMMITTEE:** Judicial Proceedings  
**POSITION:** Oppose

The Commissioners of St. Mary's County express our opposition to **SB 55 - Motor Vehicles - Police Stops - Secondary Enforcement and Excludable Evidence**. This bill expands the number of violations that may only be enforced as secondary actions and greatly extends the exclusionary rule to cover circumstances where an officer fails, regardless of good faith, to document all the reasons for a traffic stop on any citation or police report resulting from the stop. If enacted, we believe the measures proposed in this bill would significantly impair law enforcement's ability to enforce violations of law, enter necessary evidence in legal proceedings, and impede their ability to protect drivers and pedestrians.

HB 81 will hinder necessary, needed police work and make St. Mary's County's roads and citizens less safe. We urge you to **oppose SB 55**.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter and thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.

Sincerely,  
COMMISSIONERS OF ST. MARY'S COUNTY

  
James Randy Guy, President

CSMC/AB/tr  
T:/Consent/2026/013

Cc: Senator Jack Bailey  
Delegate Matthew Morgan  
Delegate Brian Crosby  
Commissioner Mike Alderson, Jr.  
Commissioner Eric Colvin  
Commissioner Michael Hewitt  
Commissioner Scott R. Ostrow  
David Weiskopf, County Administrator  
David Yingling, Deputy County Administrator  
Buffy Giddens, County Attorney  
John Sterling Houser, Deputy County Attorney

**SB 55 - unfavorable - traffic stops.pdf**

Uploaded by: Kirsten Brown

Position: UNF

**Ivan Bates**  
President



**Kirsten N. Brown**  
Coordinator

Maryland State's Attorneys' Association  
3300 North Ridge Road, Suite 185  
Ellicott City, Maryland 21043  
[kbrown@mdsaa.org](mailto:kbrown@mdsaa.org) ~ 301-748-1312

**DATE: January 16, 2026**

**BILL NUMBER: SB 55**

**POSITION: Unfavorable**

The Maryland State's Attorneys' Association (MSAA) opposes SB 55 and urges this Committee to issue an unfavorable report.

This bill sets out to accomplish an important objective, ensuring the application of our traffic laws is more equitable, but, by greatly restricting the enforcement of many provisions, ignores the critical role traffic stops play in public safety, and will have a significant chilling effect on lawful enforcement activity.

Sociologist Egon Bittner identifies a defining and core function of policing as the ability to stop "something that ought not to be happening and about which somebody had better do something now."<sup>1</sup>

To that extent, our society asks and expects law enforcement officers to intervene when they observe conduct that has been prohibited by this legislative body – whether that is driving an unsafe vehicle in violation of MD. CODE ANN., TRANSP. ("TR") § 22-101, littering in violation of TR § 21-1111, or making an unsafe turn in violation of TR § 21-604. These laws exist to protect all of us, and restricting the ability of law enforcement to intervene when they are broken removes any incentive for bad actors to comply with them.

Further, SB 55 establishes an exclusionary rule for enforcing the law. As the Supreme Court of the United States wrote in *Hudson v. Michigan*, 547 U.S. 589 (2006), the exclusionary rule imposes substantial social costs, exacting a costly toll on the truth-seeking function of our system of justice. *Id.* At 591. In addition to providing for the exclusion of evidence recovered when an officer stops an individual for the violations discussed above, which at least bears some relation to the interests that animated the bill, SB 55 also removes the "not" in MD. CODE ANN., CRIM. PROC. § 2-109(c)(2) – appearing in line 21 on page 2 of SB 55. This potentially establishes, without any clarification, an exclusionary rule that would apply for infractions as insignificant as failing to tell an individual the agency the officer works for.

Like much of SB 55, this alteration will exact an enormous social cost without any certain or discernible benefit.

MSAA welcomes a dialogue with lawmakers. We are all interested in making our communities safer and the administration of justice more equitable and fair, and looks forward to collectively developing creative solutions.

<sup>1</sup> Egon Bittner, *Florence Nightingale in Pursuit of Willie Sutton: A Theory of the Police*, in *POLICING: KEY READINGS* 150, 162 (Tim Newburn ed., 2005).

# **MCPA-MSA SB 55 SECONDARY ENFORCEMENT AND ADMISSIONS**

Uploaded by: Samira Jackson

Position: UNF



# Maryland Chiefs of Police Association Maryland Sheriffs' Association



## MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr., Chair and  
Members of the House Judiciary Committee

FROM: Darren Popkin, Executive Director, MCPA-MSA Joint Legislative Committee  
Andrea Mansfield, Representative, MCPA-MSA Joint Legislative Committee  
Samira A. Jackson, Representative, MCPA-MSA Joint Legislative Committee

DATE: January 20, 2026

RE: **SB 55 – Motor Vehicles - Secondary Enforcement and Admissibility of Evidence**

POSITION: **OPPOSE**

The Maryland Chiefs of Police Association (MCPA) and the Maryland Sheriffs' Association (MSA)  
**OPPOSE SB 55.**

SB 55 reclassifies several moving violations as subject to only secondary enforcement by Maryland police officers. Violations that would no longer be a primary offense include operating a motor vehicle with expired registration and knowingly permitting the operation of an unregistered motor vehicle. Certain moving violations that will no longer be a primary offense include refusing to remove wrecked or damaged vehicles from a highway, littering on the highway, and spinning of wheels. It is our understanding that the littering portion of this bill will be amended and removed at the bill hearing. Equipment violations reduced to a secondary offense related to the safe operation of a motor vehicle include malfunctioning or missing safety equipment such as headlights, taillights, and rearview mirrors, amongst other offenses.

This bill also requires a police officer to document all reasons for a traffic stop on any citation or report. This requirement will compel an officer to cite a violator for each and every violation observed in order to clearly justify the legal reason for the stop. Discretion will no longer apply in which an officer may forgo a speeding violation, where points apply, for a lesser violation. Otherwise, the officer is left in the perilous position of having to defend the reasons for the traffic stop. One would hardly consider it fair to "load up" the citation counts to meet this burden. This provision is tacitly unfair to the general motoring public and will only serve to exacerbate mistrust. Furthermore, this provision subjects law enforcement to potential disciplinary action for an inadvertent and unintentional oversight when writing their citation. Again, this requirement forces officers to cite for every violation that is observed, which places a burden on the officer, in order to legally justify the initial stop.

Finally, the suggestion that an officer who makes a traffic stop in violation of this bill may be subject to administrative discipline reads as an unwarranted attack on our law enforcement community who are charged with keeping our communities and our highways safe. Adding insult to injury is the provision that **ANY** evidence obtained in violation is inadmissible in **ANY** trial or other proceeding [Emphasis added]. There is not a need to disallow the admission of evidence in violation of this bill's reporting

532 Baltimore Boulevard, Suite 308  
Westminster, Maryland 21157  
667-314-3216 / 667-314-3236

requirements, as Maryland already has established standards under the exclusionary laws of both the United States Constitution, the Maryland Constitution, and the Declaration of Rights.

SB 55 if enacted as written, would have unintended consequences of undermining police enforcement of vehicle theft laws because operating a vehicle with a license registration plate removed would not authorize a *primary* traffic stop. The results of such an attempt would not be admissible in a criminal prosecution, due to the bill's exclusionary provisions, a remedy usually reserved for 4<sup>th</sup> amendment constitutional violations.

In 2019, the Maryland General Assembly passed the first Vision Zero legislation with the belief that crashes are preventable and views zero as the only acceptable number of motor vehicle deaths. The law set a goal of zero motor vehicle-related fatalities or serious injuries by 2030. The following data provides substantive evidence that Maryland is failing in achieving this goal.

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	5-Year Average
<b>Fatal Crashes</b>	496	546	524	534	577	535
<b>Injury Crashes</b>	32,938	25,360	28,142	28,027	28,577	28,609
<b>Property Damage Crashes</b>	82,583	69,728	80,243	79,908	81,247	78,742
<b>Total Crashes</b>	116,017	95,634	108,909	108,469	110,401	107,886
<b>Total of All Fatalities</b>	<b>535</b>	<b>573</b>	<b>563</b>	<b>566</b>	<b>621</b>	<b>572</b>
<b>Total Number Injured<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>48,682</b>	<b>36,790</b>	<b>40,858</b>	<b>40,719</b>	<b>41,538</b>	<b>41,717</b>

The MCPA and MSA fully support highway safety efforts, citing the following:

1. **Promoting road safety:** Violations like broken headlights or expired tags can directly impact road safety. Broken headlights can reduce a driver's visibility, making nighttime driving more dangerous for both the driver and others on the road. Stopping drivers for these reasons can address safety risks early.
2. **Deterrence of further violations:** Allowing officers to stop drivers for these types of violations serves as a deterrent. When people know that minor infractions, such as an expired tag, could result in a traffic stop, they may be more inclined to keep their vehicles properly registered and maintained.
3. **Preventing larger violations:** Some minor violations could be indicators of other potential issues, such as unlicensed or uninsured vehicles, exposing innocent vehicle operators or passengers to the risk of suffering personal physical injury or property damage by the operator of an unregistered vehicle without required automobile liability insurance. By stopping drivers for violations for expired tags, officers often uncover more serious violations, such as a lack of insurance or a suspended license, which could prevent unsafe drivers from operating vehicles.
4. **Enforcing legal requirements:** Rules of the road should be enforced consistently. If traffic laws are established and enforced uniformly, it can send a clear message that following these regulations is important for everyone. If expired tags and broken headlights are allowed to go unchecked, it could create a sense that certain traffic laws are unimportant.
5. **Supporting the vehicle registration system:** Vehicle registration and inspection systems are established to ensure that only roadworthy and legal vehicles are on the road. If expired tags

<sup>1</sup> <https://zerodeathsmd.gov/resources/crashdata/>

aren't addressed directly through primary stops, the system's effectiveness in maintaining vehicle safety and registration compliance could be reduced.

6. **Preventing future problems for the driver:** Often, drivers with expired tags or broken headlights are unaware of the violation, or they may not have the means to address it immediately. A traffic stop gives officers the chance to inform the driver of the issue and allow them the opportunity to correct it. This proactive approach can be seen as an educational opportunity to ensure that drivers are aware of violations and can take corrective action.
7. **Apprehension of violent offenders:** Timothy McVeigh, Ted Bundy, John Allen Muhammad, David Berkowitz, Rodney Alcala, Robert Ben Rhoades, Andrew Cunanan, Mark Allen Smith, Angel Resendiz, and Shawn Grate, murderers, rapists, serial killers, all apprehended as a result of traffic stops, excellent work by dedicated law enforcement officers.

Permitting violations as previously enumerated to remain as primary reasons for traffic stops serves a mix of public safety, law enforcement, and preventive goals, ensuring that traffic laws are enforced fairly and that potential risks are addressed before they lead to the horrendous accidents that we witness regularly on our highways.

Because passage of this bill would undermine enforcement of many of Maryland's mandatory vehicle operation standards, the Maryland Chiefs of Police Association and Maryland Sheriffs' Association **OPPOSE SB 55.**

# **SB 55 - Motor Vehicles - Secondary Enforcement and**

Uploaded by: Scott Shellenberger

Position: UNF

**Bill Number: SB 55**  
**Scott D. Shellenberger, State's Attorney for Baltimore County**  
**Opposed**

**WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF SCOTT D. SHELLENBERGER,**  
**STATE'S ATTORNEY FOR BALTIMORE COUNTY,**  
**IN OPPOSITION TO SENATE BILL 55**  
**MOTOR VEHICLES – SECONDARY ENFORCEMENT AND ADMISSIBILITY OF**  
**EVIDENCE**

I write in opposition to Senate Bill 55 Motor Vehicles - Secondary Enforcement and Admissibility of Evidence. This Bill prevents law enforcement officers from doing their job and enforcing the law when it comes to traffic stops. It includes a long list of offenses that would prevent officers from conducting a stop for those reasons.

Some of those laws include offenses that would interfere with making sure drivers remain safe. A car is driving on a dark 2 lane road. Cars are coming in the other direction. One of the cars does not have a left front headlight. The officer sees this but can do nothing if SB 55 is passed. The inability for police to act puts all drivers at risk. There is virtually no other statute that provides more for safety than this one. Now it is not a basis to stop someone. Now an accident occurs and SB 55 is the reason.

What is more it is one of the 1<sup>st</sup> times I have seen a Statute that if violated by a police officer could be grounds for "administrative disciplinary action against the officer." I have never seen a Statute like that in Maryland.

The important thing to remember is that all police officers now have Body Cameras. Hit play and all parties can see everything that transpired including if something wrong took place. The body camera video does in fact document everything in real time. Why must it be done again in writing. The question to be asked is since when has the Constitution and the Bill of Rights not provided enough protections to our citizens. Since when do we make things illegal but officers are prevented from enforcing the laws. If these are not considered primary violations why are they against the law.

I urge an unfavorable report.

# **MSP Position Paper LOI SB55.pdf**

Uploaded by: Catherine Kelly

Position: INFO



**State of Maryland**  
**Department of State Police**  
Government Affairs Unit  
Annapolis Office (410) 260-6100

**POSITION ON PROPOSED LEGISLATION**

**DATE:** January 20, 2026

**BILL NUMBER:** Senate Bill 0055      **POSITION:** Letter of Information

**BILL TITLE:** Motor Vehicles – Police Stops- Secondary Enforcement and Excludable Evidence

**REVIEW AND ANALYSIS**

This legislation would prohibit a police officer from enforcing certain motor vehicle laws as primary violations. Under the bill, officers would no longer be permitted to initiate a traffic stop for specific infractions, including expired registration tags, dropping hazardous materials on the roadway, or littering, and certain equipment-related violations, among others.

Under current law, a police officer must have probable cause that a violation is occurring or has occurred in order to initiate a traffic stop. Probable cause violations include equipment defects, moving violations, registration violations, and criminal indicators, such as alerts related to missing persons, Silver Alerts, stolen tags, or stolen vehicles. Traffic stops may involve both moving and non-moving violations, as well as the issuance of equipment repair orders.

The Maryland State Police (MSP) has been directly involved in multiple traffic safety initiatives to improve roadway safety and community well-being. From 2022 through 2025, MSP partnered—at the request of the Randallstown NAACP—with local law enforcement to increase visibility and enforcement, and also collaborated with the Lieutenant Governor’s Work Zone Safety Committee. In 2025, the Work Zone Safety Enforcement Initiative resulted in over 9,900 traffic stops. As a result of those stops, 43 warrants were served, 5 criminal arrests were made, including 3 CDS-related arrests, and one firearm was seized. In 2024 and 2025, MSP’s other highway safety initiatives have resulted in over 3,200 traffic stops, leading to 1,431 arrests and 32 firearms seized.

Motor vehicles are a primary means for the transportation of illegal firearms, controlled dangerous substances, and fugitives into and out of Maryland communities. Many of the violations restricted by this legislation frequently lead to the discovery of more serious criminal activity. For example, vehicles operating with improper or stolen tags are often uninsured or stolen.

Additionally, unsafe vehicles—such as those lacking headlights, brake lights, or turn signals—pose significant risks to motorists and pedestrians and contribute to dangerous roadway conditions.

Under Senate Bill 55, a vehicle operating at night without a headlight could not be stopped by law enforcement, potentially preventing an officer from intervening in a life-threatening situation. This bill prevents law enforcement from enforcing certain registration and vehicle

**State of Maryland**  
**Department of State Police**  
Government Affairs Unit  
Annapolis Office (410) 260-6100

**POSITION ON PROPOSED LEGISLATION**

violations. An additional concern is that this bill is retroactive. This means that any violation issued before the bill's effective date and any related criminal case will be dismissed if the bill is passed. Safe vehicles save lives, and traffic enforcement remains a critical component of public safety.

The Maryland General Assembly continues to address numerous traffic-related challenges impacting the State, including the rise in vehicles registered out of state but operating in Maryland, noise complaints related to motorcycles and modified exhaust systems, uninsured vehicles, tinted vehicle windows, and overall roadway safety. Senate Bill 55 would significantly limit law enforcement's ability to address many of these issues by prohibiting enforcement of these violations as primary offenses.

The Maryland Department of State Police respectfully submits this information for your consideration as you evaluate Senate Bill 55.

**SB0055 - MVA, MDTA - LOI - Motor Vehicles - Second**

Uploaded by: Patricia Westervelt

Position: INFO



Wes Moore  
Governor  
Aruna Miller  
Lieutenant Governor  
Kathryn Thomson  
Acting Secretary

January 20, 2026

The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr.  
Chair, Senate Judicial Proceedings  
2 East Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

***RE: Letter of Information – Senate Bill 55 – Motor Vehicles - Secondary Enforcement and Admissibility of Evidence***

Dear Chair Smith and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) takes no position on Senate Bill 55 and offers the following information for the Committee's consideration.

SB 55 would reclassify several types of moving violations as subject to only secondary enforcement by Maryland police officers. Among these types of moving violations that would no longer be a primary offense include failure to display valid vehicle registration plates and tabs, malfunctioning or missing safety equipment such as headlights and taillights, failure to use a turn signal when changing lanes or making a turn from a roadway, littering from a vehicle, and certain other offenses. Failure to comply with this requirement may be grounds for administrative disciplinary action against the officer, and any evidence obtained in violation of the stop shall be inadmissible in any trial or other proceeding.

Currently, the primary enforcement mechanism in Maryland for matters such as valid vehicle registration, rules of the road, and vehicle equipment is action by law enforcement in the State. The Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA) relies on referrals by law enforcement for repair orders when vital equipment such as headlights are identified as inoperable. Maintaining compliance with the Federal Clean Air Act via the Vehicle Emissions Inspection Program (VEIP), and enforcement of vehicle operation laws such as speed limits and traffic safety signals using automated enforcement devices, require vehicles to be properly registered.

When a vehicle fails to meet its VEIP testing obligations, the MVA will issue warnings and eventually suspend registration on the vehicle. A vehicle cannot renew its registration until it is brought into testing compliance. Similarly, unpaid automated enforcement citations will prevent renewal of registration of a vehicle if the jurisdiction operating the system issues an administrative flag notice to the MVA. Failure to rectify repair orders for defective or inoperable equipment such as headlights or turn signals also impacts an owner's ability to maintain or renew vehicle registrations.

The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr.

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SB 55 limits the means by which Marylanders are compelled to comply with vehicle registration requirements and safe driving behavior because it removes a vital element for enforcing these requirements. Removing law enforcement's authority to perform traffic stops that cite drivers operating vehicles with expired or no registration, inoperable safety equipment, or unsafe driving behaviors will limit the referrals to the MVA for rectifying these impediments – this has a direct impact on the safety and condition of Maryland roadways. All of these important measures contribute to Maryland's compliance with federal law, efforts to reach zero roadway deaths by 2030, and ensure safe and well-maintained transportation infrastructure in the State.

The Maryland Department of Transportation respectfully requests the committee consider this information during its deliberation of Senate Bill 55.

Respectfully submitted,

Matthew Mickler  
Director of Government Affairs  
Maryland Department of Transportation  
410-865-1090