

SB349

Uploaded by: Alonzo Washington

Position: FAV

ALONZO T. WASHINGTON
Legislative District 22
Prince George's County

Finance Committee



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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

February 4, 2026

The Honorable Will Smith, Chair
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
Maryland Senate
Annapolis, Maryland

Re: Senate Bill 349 – Vehicle Laws – Eluding Police – Penalties

Dear Chair Smith and Members of the Committee:

I respectfully submit this testimony in support of Senate Bill 349, legislation that alters the penalties for attempting to elude a police officer when that conduct results in the death of another person and reclassifies the offense as a felony.

This bill is rooted in a tragic and preventable loss. In March 2025, three-year-old Zoey Harrison was killed when a driver fleeing a police traffic stop crashed into the vehicle in which she was riding. Her death, one of multiple fatalities in a short period of time caused by individuals fleeing law enforcement, exposed a critical gap in Maryland law: when a person deliberately attempts to elude police and that decision results in the death of an innocent bystander, the offense is currently classified as a misdemeanor.

In response to Zoey's death, Prince George's County enacted Zoey's Law to reform police pursuit policies by clarifying engagement standards, strengthening oversight, and requiring transparent reporting. Senate Bill 349 complements that local reform by addressing a separate but equally important issue — accountability after a fatal outcome occurs. This bill does not regulate police conduct or pursuit decisions. Instead, it ensures that Maryland law appropriately reflects the gravity of the harm caused when flight from police results in the loss of life. Attempting to elude law enforcement is an intentional act that places the public at significant risk. Nationally and locally, fleeing drivers pose a heightened danger to pedestrians, passengers, and other motorists. When that conduct results in death, treating the offense as a misdemeanor fails to align legal consequences with the severity of the outcome and undermines the deterrent purpose of the law.

Other states have recognized this reality. For example, Florida classifies willful flight from law enforcement as a felony, with enhanced felony penalties when serious bodily injury or death occurs. Maryland's current statutory framework lags behind this standard of proportional accountability.

Senate Bill 349 addresses this gap by reclassifying attempting to elude police resulting in death as a felony, with graduated penalties that reflect both the seriousness of the conduct and the outcome. The bill preserves prosecutorial discretion, judicial discretion, and all existing procedural safeguards. It does not create a new offense or impose mandatory minimum sentences. It simply ensures that when the most severe harm occurs, the law responds accordingly.

We cannot undo the tragedies that prompted this legislation, but we can take responsible action to prevent future loss of life. Elevating this offense to a felony honors the lives of innocent victims like Zoey Harrison and reinforces Maryland's commitment to public safety and accountability.

For these reasons, I respectfully request a favorable report on Senate Bill 349.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alonzo T. Washington', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Alonzo T. Washington
Maryland State Senate
District 22

MCPA_MSA SB 349 - Eluding Police - Penalties SUPP.

Uploaded by: Samira Jackson

Position: FAV



Maryland Chiefs of Police Association

Maryland Sheriffs' Association



MEMORANDUM

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

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

DATE: February 4, 2026

RE: **SB 349 - Vehicle Laws - Eluding Police - Penalties**

POSITION: **SUPPORT**

The Maryland Chiefs of Police Association (MCPA) and the Maryland Sheriffs' Association (MSA) **SUPPORT SB 349**. This bill strengthens Maryland's vehicle laws by updating penalties for motorists who attempt to elude law enforcement officers and clarify that attempts to flee, whether on foot or in a vehicle, are prohibited when an officer has signaled for a stop. The bill also establishes enhanced penalties, including felony-level consequences, when such conduct results in the death of another person, thereby aligning legal consequences with the severity of the outcome.

Further, the police chiefs and sheriffs support this legislation because it enhances public safety by holding dangerous offenders accountable and deterring reckless behavior that places officers and the public at risk. Eluding a police officer is not a victimless act, and it frequently occurs at high speeds or in congested areas, endangering motorists, pedestrians, and law enforcement personnel. Clear, stronger statutory penalties send an unequivocal message that fleeing from police will not be tolerated and that those whose conduct results in catastrophic harm will face serious consequences.

By supporting this bill, law enforcement leaders want to reaffirm their commitment to reducing violent traffic offenses, protecting their officers in the line of duty, and promoting safer roads for all Maryland residents. For these reasons, MCPA and MSA **SUPPORT SB 349** and urge a **FAVORABLE** committee report.

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Uploaded by: Tre' Sawyers

Position: FAV

February 3, 2026

Dear Senator Alanzo T. Williams,

I, Gina M. Pryor, am writing to advocate for my granddaughter, the late Zoey Rose Marie Harrison. May her soul rest in peace. When I learned of my 3-year-old granddaughter's death, I was overwhelmed with confusion, devastation, and hurt. I was supposed to take Zoey and her first cousin, Arley, to a birthday party celebration that Saturday, but I never had the chance to do so.

This tragedy has profoundly affected my family, leaving us mentally, physically, and financially disoriented. We are shattered and struggling to understand why this incident occurred and took my granddaughter from us. By the grace of God, my daughter, Tanishia O. Harrison, survived.

This unthinkable tragedy should never have happened to my family or any other family. Zoey never had the opportunity to live a full life, and my daughter had to lay her 3-year-old daughter to rest. Additionally, two similar police chase accidents occurred in the same month before my granddaughter's death on March 7, 2025. This pattern has emerged and needs to stop immediately.

I am urging you to recognize the importance, power, purpose, and urgency of passing Zoey's Law.

The Importance of Zoey's Law

Zoey's Law is a powerful reminder that every child's life is precious and deserves protection. This law was created to prevent tragedies, ensure accountability, and spare other families from the pain my family has endured over the past ten months. Our experiences have inspired this important legislation.

1. Protecting Children

Zoey's Law prioritizes the safety of children. It ensures that when there are concerns about a child's well-being, those concerns are taken seriously, investigated promptly, and addressed with urgency. By strengthening safety protocols, reporting systems, and care standards depending on the version of the law, Zoey's Law aims to prevent harm to any other child.

2. Honoring Zoey's Legacy

This law serves as a living memorial, transforming a heartbreaking loss into meaningful change. Through the Zoey Law, Zoey's name symbolizes (life), protection, hope, and advocacy for all children. It ensures that her life continues to make a significant impact.

3. Accountability and Oversight

Systems sometimes fail, and Zoey Law helps close the gaps. It promotes:

- stronger oversight of caregivers or institutions,
- mandatory reporting,
- clearer communication between agencies, and
- consequences when protocols are ignored.

This ensures that adults and institutions responsible for children's safety are held accountable.

4. Empowering Families

Zoey's Law gives families the tools and supports they need to speak up when something is wrong. It strengthens the rights of parents, guardians, and loved ones to demand proper care and attention.

5. Preventing Future Tragedies

Most importantly, Zoey's Law exists to save lives. By improving safety standards and increasing awareness, it works to ensure that no other child becomes a victim, and no other family endures the same pain my family has endured.

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Uploaded by: Tre' Sawyers

Position: FAV

Dear Senator Alonzo T. Washington,

My name is Tanishia Robinson, and I am writing to you in honor of my daughter, Zoey Rose Marie Harrison. I respectfully ask for your continued support in helping Zoey's Law become a reality—not only for my family, but for the many families who have suffered in silence.

Zoey's story is not an isolated incident. This type of situation has now occurred three times, each time involving innocent civilians. That alone demonstrates this is not just a tragedy—it is a pattern, and one that must be addressed. No family should have to endure this level of loss, confusion, and heartbreak, and no child should ever be placed in harm's way due to systemic failure.

Losing Zoey has forever changed me. The impact has been emotional, mental, and spiritual, and the weight of this loss does not fade with time. Our family carries it every single day. While grief can feel unbearable, what hurts just as deeply is knowing this could happen again to another child if nothing changes.

Zoey's Law is not just about my daughter. It is about protecting children, holding systems accountable, and creating safer communities. This legislation would bring awareness, structure, and responsibility where there is currently a gap. It would help prevent future tragedies, ensure proper oversight, and send a clear message that our children's lives matter and deserve protection.

This law gives families like mine a voice. It gives purpose to Zoey's life and ensures that her story leads to meaningful change. No parent should have to stand where I stand today—seeking justice after loss. We should be protecting our children before it is too late.

Thank you for taking the time to hear my story and for standing with families seeking change. I truly believe Zoey's Law can save lives and help create a safer future for our children and our communities.

Sincerely,
Tanishia Robinson

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Uploaded by: Tre' Sawyers

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Attention: Alonzo T. Washington,

Dear Society, Law Enforcement, Government Officials, Community Leaders, and Advocates,

On behalf of my sister, Tanishia O. Harrison, and our family and friends, I—Robin Dunbar, Aunt of Zoey Rose Marie Harrison—write to ask for your continued support in passing Zoey’s Law.

A careless and preventable act took Zoey’s life from our family. That single moment shattered our world. In the days and weeks that followed, we learned that this same type of reckless behavior has taken the lives of other innocent people in other families—families now navigating the same unfamiliar, painful territory we were forced into. No family should ever have to join this kind of grief-filled community.

The day we lost Zoey is the day our lives changed forever. While the pain may be most intense for her parents and siblings, grief is grief. We lost an innocent, resilient soul—an irreplaceable part of our lifeline.

At the time of Zoey’s passing, I was out of town. I cannot fully describe the anguish of being the eldest sister, the eldest daughter, and most importantly, Zoey’s aunt, and not being able to physically be with my family during the most devastating moment of our lives. For the past eight years, I have worked in pediatric emergency care. I have witnessed this kind of trauma impact other families, never imagining it would one day become our own story.

I have heard a mother’s wail before—but hearing my sister’s cries, knowing this pain was now ours, tore my heart open in a way I never thought possible. From another state, I tried desperately to help—alerting hospitals, reaching out to family, doing anything I could to feel connected and to protect my loved ones in any way possible. Even knowing that no one’s situation is “greater” than another’s, in that moment, my sister’s pain was my entire world.

This is why I say, without hesitation or doubt: Zoey’s Law must be passed. It is not acceptable for reckless behavioral choices to take innocent lives. Accountability matters. Prevention matters. Lives matter.

Zoey mattered.

Please stand with us. Stand with every family who should never have to write a letter like this.

Sincerely,
A Grieving Aunt,
Robin Dunbar

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Position: FAV

Good morning Senator Washington,

I am writing to share why Zoey's Law is so important for the greater good of our state and our communities. Non-violent offenses should not result in high-speed chases, particularly through residential neighborhoods. In those moments, there are too many unknown variables, and far too often, they end in tragedy.

Because of decisions made in moments like these, I now watch my sister grieve the loss of her youngest child. Despite that pain, she still has to wake up every day, work, survive, and find the strength to fight for change for her baby. No parent and no family should ever have to carry that burden.

Zoey's life mattered. Her story matters. And the changes this law represents matter. If Zoey's Law can prevent even one family from experiencing what ours has endured, then her life will not have been lost in vain.

I respectfully ask for your support of Zoey's Law and for your leadership in helping create safer policies that protect innocent lives—especially in neighborhoods where children and families should feel safe.

Thank you for your time, your leadership, and your commitment to our community.

Sincerely,
Latoya Nicole