



Maryland Chiefs of Police Association Maryland Sheriffs' Association



MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable J. Sandy Bartlett, 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 Jackson, Representative, MCPA-MSA Joint Legislative Committee

DATE: March 10, 2026

RE: **HB 1359 - Police Pursuits of Fleeing Suspects - Standards (Dimeka Thornton Act)**

POSITION: **LETTER OF INFORMATION**

The Maryland Chiefs of Police Association (MCPA) and the Maryland Sheriffs' Association (MSA) submit this **Letter of Information** to provide context regarding police vehicle pursuits and the operational policies that currently govern them. Vehicle pursuits are widely recognized within the law enforcement profession as high-risk activities. For this reason, most agencies in Maryland operate under strict pursuit policies that are designed to balance public safety, officer safety, and the need to apprehend individuals who pose a serious threat to the community.

In practice, police pursuits are generally justified only when the need for immediate apprehension outweighs the risks created by the pursuit itself. This typically includes circumstances where a suspect is believed to have committed or is committing a serious or violent crime, such as armed robbery, homicide, or carjacking, or where the suspect presents an immediate danger to the public. Agencies also consider whether safer alternatives exist, such as identifying the suspect for later apprehension or utilizing aviation support or tracking technology. Pursuits are rarely initiated for minor offenses, and officers are trained to continuously evaluate whether the pursuit remains justified as conditions change.

Modern pursuit policies place significant emphasis on risk management and supervisory oversight. Supervisors are generally required to monitor or authorize pursuits as soon as practical, ensure that the pursuit meets policy criteria, limit the number of pursuing vehicles, and direct tactical decisions such as transitioning to alternative methods or terminating the pursuit. Officers must constantly assess factors such as traffic conditions, the presence of pedestrians, weather, lighting, road conditions, and whether the pursuit is occurring in residential areas or

school zones. If the risks to the public become too great, officers or supervisors are required to terminate the pursuit.

Law enforcement agencies also maintain accountability through detailed reporting and review after a pursuit occurs. These reviews typically include supervisory evaluation of the justification for the pursuit, analysis of any collisions or injuries, and review of available dash camera or body-worn camera footage. These processes are used to ensure policy compliance and to improve training and operational decision making moving forward.

Further, the Maryland Police Training and Standards Commission (MPTSC) is currently convening a subcommittee to discuss the development of a statewide pursuit policy. Developing such a policy is complex and must account for numerous real-world factors, including weather conditions, road conditions, surrounding environments, and the nature of the threat posed by the fleeing suspect, while also ensuring the policy can be clearly taught and applied by officers in rapidly evolving situations. Given these considerations, the development of a comprehensive pursuit policy may be better suited to a workgroup process to ensure these varying circumstances are thoughtfully addressed.

MCPA and MSA appreciate the Committee's attention to this important public safety issue and offer this information to help inform the discussion surrounding House Bill 1359. Law enforcement agencies across Maryland share the goal of protecting the public while ensuring that pursuit policies prioritize safety, accountability, and responsible decision making.