

HB 1359: Police Pursuits of Fleeing Suspects - Standards (Dimeka Thornton Act):
Please vote to **OPPOSE** this bill.

Dear Judiciary Committee:

I am writing to strongly urge you to **OPPOSE HB 1359** during committee consideration or floor votes.

While the intent to reduce pursuit-related accidents is understandable, this bill goes too far and could seriously undermine public safety and law enforcement effectiveness.

Fleeing suspects—particularly those driving recklessly or wanted for violent crimes—pose an immediate threat to the community. **When officers are prohibited from pursuing or forced to terminate pursuits prematurely, dangerous drivers are allowed to escape, increasing the risk that they will continue endangering others on the road, commit additional crimes, or flee to another jurisdiction where they may harm more people.** In rural and suburban areas, where response times are longer and backup is limited, restricting pursuits could allow suspects to evade arrest entirely, leaving victims without justice and communities less safe.

Current pursuit policies already include guidelines for balancing risk to the public, officer safety, and the need for apprehension. Many agencies use tactics like tire deflation devices, helicopter assistance, or perimeter containment to safely resolve pursuits. **A one-size-fits-all state mandate overrides local agency discretion, second-guesses officers in split-second decisions, and could deter proactive policing, embolden criminals to flee, and ultimately lead to more—not fewer—public safety incidents.**

Maryland should trust trained law enforcement professionals and local departments to make reasonable pursuit decisions based on specific circumstances, not impose rigid restrictions that tie officers' hands and prioritize suspect escape over community protection.

For these reasons, I respectfully ask you to **vote against HB 1359.**

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration of my concerns regarding this critical public safety and law enforcement matter.

Sincerely,

Trudy Tibbals