



LEGISLATIVE BLACK CAUCUS OF MARYLAND, INC.

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Chair J. Sandy Bartlett
Judiciary Committee
100 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Chair Bartlett and Members of the Committee,

The Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland offers its strong and favorable support for Senate Bil 81- Motor Vehicle - Police Stops - Secondary Enforcement and Excludable Evidence. The bill requires that police officers document all reasons for stopping an individual on a citation or police report. If certain violations are violated during a stop, any evidence found as a result of the stop must be excluded from proceedings. The bill permits police officers to enforce only certain traffic laws as a secondary reason, which means police officers must have another valid reason for the stop. HB81 addresses racial disparities in traffic stops that the minority communities face while enforcing police accountability, accuracy, and transparency in law enforcement. **This bill is a 2026 legislative priority for the Black Caucus.**

The Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland believes that HB 81 will help address unwarranted searches and traffic stops, especially those involving minor violations. In Maryland, Black drivers have experienced searches, the use of force during traffic stops, and excessive stops in situations where public safety was not at risk. HB 81 will allow law enforcement to refocus on safety threats rather than the continuing practices that contribute to racial disparities and avoidable situations in our communities. Black drivers have faced a disproportionate amount of traffic stops compared to other races. According to the Maryland Office of Public Defender, in 2023, data showed that black drivers account for roughly 43% of all traffic stops, despite Black Marylanders making up 32% of the state population. In contrast, white drivers account for 37% of stops while they represent 57% of the population. Additionally, white drivers comprise 57% of the driving population but receive only 25% of all traffic citations, while black individuals receive 57%. HB 81 will reduce unnecessary stops that affect minorities and promote fairness and police accountability. It will decrease the disparities and allow refocusing on enforcement to avoid stops that are not necessary.

Additionally, HB 81 provides a clearer direction for addressing safety issues, enhances and helps build the trust between law enforcement and the community. The Maryland Office of Public Defender's office also provided insight into reforms from other states. In Philadelphia, the Driving Equality Act has restricted police officers from stopping drivers for low-level violations. Since the bill passed in Philadelphia, 54% of non-safety-related stops involving black people have decreased, while other serious offenses have increased, allowing

officers to refocus their attempt on investigating serious crimes. Similarly, in Virginia, the traffic stops were reduced by 17%, representing how racial disparities in traffic enforcement have decreased. House Bill 81 can create the same effect as other states reforms have done in order to stop unnecessary and radically disparate traffic stops in Maryland communities.

It is critical to support HB 81 as these changes prevent unnecessary law enforcement encounters and allow the efforts to focus on real hazards that endanger our safety. HB 81 provides a shift in mindset for excessive police intervention, prioritizes equitable, and just policing.

For these reasons, the Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland strongly supports House Bill 81.

Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland