

February 20, 2026

**TESTIMONY ON HB 81**  
**Motor Vehicles - Police Stops - Secondary Enforcement and Excludable Evidence**  
**Judiciary Committee**

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT**

**Submitted by: Lisa Hamer & Octavia Carson, Senior Policy & Advocacy Counsels,  
Fair and Just Prosecution**

Dear Chair Bartlett, Vice Chair Davis, and Members of the Judiciary Committee:

We write on behalf of Fair and Just Prosecution (FJP) to express our support for HB 81. FJP, a project of the Tides Center, is a national organization that brings together elected prosecutors as part of a nonpartisan network of leaders committed to improving public safety and promoting justice. FJP works with a new generation of prosecutors from all across the country who are committed to a justice system grounded in fairness, compassion, and fiscal responsibility. The leaders we work with hail from over 60 jurisdictions — urban, suburban, and rural alike — and they collectively represent nearly 20% of our nation’s population.

FJP encourages state and local leaders to examine their criminal legal system’s practices and consider policies that create a fairer, evidence-based approach to criminal justice. We support efforts to build trust between community members and law enforcement that advance the safety of our communities, such as crucial efforts to reduce non-public-safety traffic stops.

We believe that measures that limit traffic stops to circumstances that threaten police officers and the community, such as HB 81, are integral to advancing justice and fairness in the criminal legal system and promoting public safety. Non-public-safety traffic stops, i.e., vehicle stops for non-dangerous traffic violations such as driving with an expired registration, tinted windows or a single headlight do not help to advance road safety. Across the country, those traffic stops, which require extensive law enforcement time and resources, do very little to combat serious crime. For example, data from a myriad of cities and states, show that only around or less than 2% of traffic stops lead to an arrest or seizure of contraband.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> See Frank R. Baumgartner et al., *Suspect Citizens: What 20 Million Traffic Stops Tell Us About Policing and Race* 60-63 (Cambridge University Press 2018) (hereinafter: *Suspect Citizens*) (North Carolina); Nebraska State Patrol, 2023 – The Year in Review (2023), [https://nebraskalegislature.gov/FloorDocs/108/PDF/Agencies/State\\_Patrol\\_Nebraska/461\\_20240808-144806.pdf](https://nebraskalegislature.gov/FloorDocs/108/PDF/Agencies/State_Patrol_Nebraska/461_20240808-144806.pdf); Cf. Rory Pulvino et al., *Traffic Stop Policy in Ramsey County, MN*, Justice Innovation Lab (June 7, 2023), <https://knowledgehub.justiceinnovationlab.org/reports/traffic-stop-policy-ramsey-county> (hereinafter: Ramsey Research)(explaining that only .8% of traffic stops lead to firearm seizures).

In fact, non-public-safety traffic stops actually jeopardize public safety in several ways. They can escalate into confrontations between citizens and police officers, sometimes resulting in injuries or even deaths.<sup>2</sup> For officers, traffic stops in Maryland contribute to nearly 30% of law-enforcement related deaths since 2021.<sup>3</sup> Fatalities for civilians during traffic stops are, unfortunately, a systemic problem: one study found that over 400 unarmed drivers or passengers who were not being pursued for any serious crime have been killed during traffic stops in five years.<sup>4</sup>

Research also shows that non-public-safety traffic stops erode people's trust in and willingness to cooperate with law enforcement.<sup>5</sup> This is especially true for Black people and other people of color, who are overwhelmingly more likely to be stopped, cited, searched, and even killed in those situations.<sup>6</sup> For example, in Baltimore County, police officers stopped black drivers over 80,000 more times than white drivers between 2018 and 2024, despite racial composition of the county being only 30% black.<sup>7</sup> In registration-related stops, about three out of every four white drivers were released without a citation, but black and hispanic drivers were cited on or over  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the time.<sup>8</sup> And a recently published study with data from 2017-2022 found that Black people were not only far more likely to be pulled over, but searched as well.<sup>9</sup> HB 81 aims to address

---

<sup>2</sup> David D. Kirkpatrick et al., *Why Many Police Traffic Stops Turn Deadly*, N.Y. Times (Oct. 31, 2021), <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/31/us/police-traffic-stops-killings.html> (hereinafter: N.Y. Times 2021); David D. Kirkpatrick et al., *Cities Try to Turn the Tide on Police Traffic Stops*, N.Y. Times (Apr. 15, 2022), <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/15/us/police-traffic-stops.html> (hereinafter: N.Y. Times 2022).

<sup>3</sup> See Attorney General of Maryland, *IID Data and Metrics*, <https://oag.maryland.gov/resources-info/Pages/IID-Data.aspx> (last visited Feb. 20, 2026); Governor's Office of Crime and Prevention and Policy, *In Custody and Law Enforcement Involved Deaths in Maryland*, <https://app.powerbigov.us/view?r=eyJrjoiNTFjYjBkYWMyYWMtYWJlMjY2RmLWwYUjU0MTQwNGI2MzEwZDUzliwidCI6IjYwYWZlOWUyLTQ5Y2QtNDIiMS04ODUxLTY0ZGYwMjc2YTJlOCJ9> (last visited Feb. 20, 2026).

<sup>4</sup> N.Y. Times 2021, *supra* note 2.

<sup>5</sup> Roulent Vesselinov et al., *Analysis of Traffic Stops and Race in Maryland*, UMaryland (last visited Feb. 20, 2026), <https://archive.hshsl.umaryland.edu/server/api/core/bitstreams/3bda31be-5269-418c-a55f-4d763fe40e9f/content>; Lynn Langton and Matthew Durose (BJS), *Police Behavior during Traffic and Street Stops*, (Oct. 27, 2016) 4, 9, <https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/pbtss11.pdf>; see also Charles R. Epp et al., *Pulled Over: How Police Stops Define Race and Citizenship* 135 (2014); Charles R. Epp et al., *Beyond Profiling: The Institutional Sources of Racial Disparities in Policing*, 77 Pub. Admin. Rev. 168 (Mar./Apr. 2017); Suspect Citizens, *supra* note 1, at 11-14.

<sup>6</sup> Langton & Durose, *supra* note 5 at 3, 9; Emma Pierson et al., *A Large-Scale Analysis of Racial Disparities in Police Stops Across the United States*, 4 Nature Human Behaviour 736 (May 4, 2020), <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41562-020-0858-1>; The Stanford Open Policing Project, *Findings*, <https://openpolicing.stanford.edu/findings/> (last visited Feb. 20, 2026; NYU, *Research Shows Black Drivers More Likely to Be Stopped by Police* (May 5, 2020),

<https://www.nyu.edu/about/news-publications/news/2020/may/black-drivers-more-likely-to-be-stopped-by-police.html>; Chris Horn, *Racial Disparities Revealed in Massive Traffic Stop Dataset*, UNI. S. C. (June 12, 2020), [https://sc.edu/uofsc/posts/2020/06/racial\\_disparities\\_traffic\\_stops.php#.YXr5s9bMLlw](https://sc.edu/uofsc/posts/2020/06/racial_disparities_traffic_stops.php#.YXr5s9bMLlw); N.Y. Times 2021, *supra* note 2.

<sup>7</sup> Ben Conarck and Greg Morton, *How 'driving while Black' persists in Baltimore County*, The Baltimore Banner (Oct. 27, 2025), <https://www.thebanner.com/community/criminal-justice/baltimore-county-traffic-stops-racial-profiling-HGFW5CH6T5BBDHH4M7ZO6S4HAA/>

<sup>8</sup> *Id.*

<sup>9</sup> Lauren Hamilton Edwards et al, *Baltimore County Traffic Stop Deep Dive 2017- 2022*, (Dec. 22, 2023) [https://www.baltimorecountymd.gov/files/Documents/Executive/EquitablePolicingWorkgroup/TrafficStopDeepDiveReport.pdf?fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZW0CMTAAR2nLNgHwRuasCFhVL38u2to5Lu7jKfP7Qa0OL5\\_-yL34VRM6ACs05vomE\\_aem\\_AYbIHDm80ZNwKsT4zrNifq9Juqt1uu4luZj3eVKNLJ-FTzGBLQcFCF74IDpEGbN47qCD9KxuUmfXP8q4mCiVns](https://www.baltimorecountymd.gov/files/Documents/Executive/EquitablePolicingWorkgroup/TrafficStopDeepDiveReport.pdf?fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZW0CMTAAR2nLNgHwRuasCFhVL38u2to5Lu7jKfP7Qa0OL5_-yL34VRM6ACs05vomE_aem_AYbIHDm80ZNwKsT4zrNifq9Juqt1uu4luZj3eVKNLJ-FTzGBLQcFCF74IDpEGbN47qCD9KxuUmfXP8q4mCiVns).

these racial disparities in traffic enforcement. The loss of trust between law enforcement and the community is damaging to law enforcement and public safety on a larger scale: Law enforcement and prosecutors depend on trust and cooperation from the public to protect public safety, solve crimes, and hold perpetrators accountable.<sup>10</sup>

To combat these racial disparities, several jurisdictions<sup>11</sup> and prosecutors<sup>12</sup> have implemented reforms to reduce or limit non-public-safety stops. Research has shown that these reforms have led to an increase in traffic safety stops, which resulted in a significant reduction in traffic crashes, including fatal ones.<sup>13</sup> Racial disparities in traffic stops and searches also reduced, while crime outcomes did not change.<sup>14</sup> Thus, limiting non-public-safety stops can increase trust in law enforcement without compromising public safety. Such reforms also advance public safety by allowing law enforcement to use their limited resources in a way that prioritizes prevention and detection of serious crimes.

FJP strongly supports HB 81. It will limit traffic stops by police officers to circumstances in which there's a significant, articulable public safety concern, allowing law enforcement to focus their resources on combatting crime and advancing road safety. Crucially, by allowing traffic stops in circumstances in which an equipment violation does pose a safety threat, HB 81 does not undermine law enforcement's key role in keeping roadways safe.

Traffic stops are the most common interaction between the police and the public, with more than 50,000 people across the U.S. pulled over on a typical day.<sup>15</sup> A majority of the nation's voters –

---

<sup>10</sup> See, e.g., See Tom R. Tyler & Jeffrey Fagan, *Legitimacy and Cooperation: Why Do People Help the Police Fight Crime in Their Communities?*, 6 Ohio St. J. Crim. L. 231, 263 (2008), [https://scholarship.law.columbia.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1388&context=faculty\\_scholarship](https://scholarship.law.columbia.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1388&context=faculty_scholarship); Tom R. Tyler & Jonathan Jackson, *Popular Legitimacy and the Exercise of Legal Authority: Motivating Compliance, Cooperation and Engagement*, 20 Psych., Pub. Pol'y & L. 78, 78-79 (Aug. 2013), <https://law.yale.edu/sites/default/files/area/center/justice/document/ssrnpopularlegitimacy.pdf>.

<sup>11</sup> For example, Virginia; Oakland, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Berkeley, California; Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Seattle, Washington; Lansing, Michigan; Brooklyn Center in Minnesota; Oakland, Los Angeles, and San Francisco, California; Minneapolis, Minnesota; and Portland, Oregon have implemented reforms. See N.Y. Times 2022, *Supra* note 2; Simone Weichselbaum et al., *Police Face a 'Crisis of Trust' with Black Motorists. One State's Surprising Policy May Help*, NBC News (Oct. 7, 2021), <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/traffic-stops-are-flashpoint-policing-america-reformers-are-winning-big-n1280594>; Ram Subramanian & Leily Arzy, *Rethinking How Law Enforcement Is Deployed*, Brennan Center for Justice (Nov. 17, 2022) <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/rethinking-how-law-enforcement-deployed>.

<sup>12</sup> For example, John Choi in Ramsey County, Minnesota; Eli Savit in Washtenaw County, Michigan; and Sarah George in Chittenden County, Vermont have implemented reforms. TCR Staff, *Ending Unnecessary Traffic Stops That Can Kill*, The Crime Report (Dec. 20, 2021), <https://thecrimereport.org/2021/12/20/ending-unnecessary-traffic-stops-that-can-kill/>; The Associated Press and Peter Cox, *Ramsey County Ends Felony Prosecutions from Low-level Stops*, MPR News (Sep. 8, 2021), <https://www.mprnews.org/story/2021/09/08/ramsey-county-ends-felony-prosecutions-from-lowlevel-stops>.

<sup>13</sup> Mike D. Fliss et al., *Re-prioritizing Traffic Stops to Reduce Motor Vehicle Crash Outcomes and Racial Disparities*, 7:3 Injury Epidemiology (Jan. 20, 2020), <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1186/s40621-019-0227-6>.

<sup>14</sup> *Id.*; see also Ramsey Research, *supra* note 1.

<sup>15</sup> Findings, *supra* note 6.



across political and regional spectrums – support limiting traffic stops not rooted in safety concerns,<sup>16</sup> as proposed by HB 81.

For the reasons detailed above, grounded in our commitment to advance public safety and positive prosecutorial and law enforcement practices, FJP urges the Committee to vote favorably on HB 81.

Sincerely,

Lisa Hamer, Senior Policy & Advocacy Counsel  
Octavia Carson, Senior Policy & Advocacy Counsel  
Fair and Just Prosecution

---

<sup>16</sup> Vera, *New Polling Shows Support for Limiting Police Stops for Non-Safety-Related Traffic Infractions* (March 2023), <https://vera-institute.files.svdcdn.com/production/images/STOPS-New-Polling-Shows-Support-for-Limiting-Police-Stops-for-Non-Safety-Related-Traffic-Infractions.pdf>