



**State of Maryland**  
**Department of State Police**  
Government Affairs Unit  
Annapolis Office (410) 260-6100

**POSITION ON PROPOSED LEGISLATION**

**DATE:** February 24, 2026

**BILL NUMBER:** House Bill 81      **POSITION:** Letter of Information

**BILL TITLE:** Motor Vehicles – Police Stops- Secondary Enforcement and Excludable Evidence

**REVIEW AND ANALYSIS**

This legislation would prohibit a police officer from enforcing certain motor vehicle laws as primary violations. Under the bill, officers would no longer be permitted to initiate a traffic stop for specific infractions, including expired registration tags, dropping hazardous materials on the roadway, or littering, and certain equipment-related violations, among others.

Under current law, a police officer must have probable cause that a violation is occurring or has occurred in order to initiate a traffic stop. Probable cause violations include equipment defects, moving violations, registration violations, and criminal indicators, such as alerts related to missing persons, Silver Alerts, stolen tags, or stolen vehicles. Traffic stops may involve both moving and non-moving violations, as well as the issuance of equipment repair orders.

The Maryland State Police (MSP) has been directly involved in multiple traffic safety initiatives to improve roadway safety and community well-being. From 2022 through 2025, MSP partnered—at the request of the Randallstown NAACP—with local law enforcement to increase visibility and enforcement, and also collaborated with the Lieutenant Governor’s Work Zone Safety Committee. In 2025, the Work Zone Safety Enforcement Initiative resulted in over 9,900 traffic stops. As a result of those stops, 43 warrants were served, 5 criminal arrests were made, including 3 CDS-related arrests, and one firearm was seized. In 2024 and 2025, MSP’s other highway safety initiatives have resulted in over 3,200 traffic stops, leading to 1,431 arrests and 32 firearms seized.

Motor vehicles are a primary means for the transportation of illegal firearms, controlled dangerous substances, and fugitives into and out of Maryland communities. Many of the violations restricted by this legislation frequently lead to the discovery of more serious criminal activity. For example, vehicles operating with improper or stolen tags are often uninsured or stolen.

Additionally, unsafe vehicles—such as those lacking headlights, brake lights, or turn signals—pose significant risks to motorists and pedestrians and contribute to dangerous roadway conditions.

Under House Bill 81, a vehicle operating at night without a headlight could not be stopped by law enforcement, potentially preventing an officer from intervening in a life-threatening situation. This bill prevents law enforcement from enforcing certain registration and vehicle

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violations. An additional concern is that this bill is retroactive. This means that any violation issued before the bill's effective date and any related criminal case will be dismissed if the bill is passed. Safe vehicles save lives, and traffic enforcement remains a critical component of public safety.

The Maryland General Assembly continues to address numerous traffic-related challenges impacting the State, including the rise in vehicles registered out of state but operating in Maryland, noise complaints related to motorcycles and modified exhaust systems, uninsured vehicles, tinted vehicle windows, and overall roadway safety. House Bill 81 would significantly limit law enforcement's ability to address many of these issues by prohibiting enforcement of these violations as primary offenses.

The Maryland Department of State Police respectfully submits this information for your consideration as you evaluate House Bill 81.