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March 10, 2026

TO: The Honorable J. Sandy Bartlett  
Chair, Judiciary Committee

FROM: Tiffany Clark  
Director, Legislative Affairs, Office of the Attorney General

RE: House Bill 1359 - Police Pursuits of Fleeing Suspects - Standards (Dimeka Thornton Act)(Support with Amendments)

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The Office of the Attorney General (OAG) supports House Bill 1359 - Police Pursuits of Fleeing Suspects - Standards (Dimeka Thornton Act) with the amendment described below.

HB 1359 establishes a statewide framework for collecting and reporting data on police pursuits of fleeing suspects, requires each law enforcement agency to submit its pursuit policy annually to the Maryland Police Training and Standards Commission, directs the Commission to develop a model pursuit policy in consultation with the Attorney General and local law enforcement agencies, and requires each agency to adopt a policy meeting or exceeding that model by July 1, 2028.

We appreciate the intent of this legislation to improve public safety outcomes, promote transparency and data-driven policymaking, and establish consistent standards for police pursuits across the State. However, to ensure effective implementation and to preserve the integrity of both the data the bill aims to collect and analyze and the model policy the Commission is directed to develop, we respectfully recommend the following amendment:

**The bill should be amended to require the Commission to define "pursuit" for purposes of its best practices recommendations and model policy development.** As currently drafted, the bill directs the Commission to develop a model pursuit policy but does not define the term that anchors that work. Without a uniform definition, the model policy will lack a shared conceptual foundation, and law enforcement agencies are likely to apply varying thresholds for what

constitutes a pursuit in implementing it, producing inconsistent practices across jurisdictions and undermining the very goals this legislation seeks to advance.

We recognize that statewide data on pursuits has already been collected under varying agency-level definitions, and we do not recommend disrupting that existing data infrastructure by imposing a new uniform definition for reporting purposes at this stage. Rather, we recommend that the bill be amended to expressly direct the Commission to establish a definition of "pursuit" as part of its model policy development process, so that the Commission's best practices guidance and model policy are grounded in a consistent, shared understanding of the conduct being regulated.

This concern is also relevant to the OAG's Independent Investigations Division (IID), which reviews certain police-involved pursuits under a distinct statutory framework with its own investigative mandate. We recommend that any definition of "pursuit" adopted for purposes of this bill include an express carve-out making clear that it does not govern or alter the scope of IID's jurisdiction over police-involved incidents. A definition drawn for data collection and model policy purposes should not be read to independently inform or constrain how IID applies its own statute to determine the universe of incidents it is obligated to review. Preserving that distinction will allow IID to continue exercising its judgment under its authorizing statute, while ensuring that the Commission's work is guided by a clear and workable standard.

With this amendment, this legislation will lay a stronger foundation for the statewide pursuit data infrastructure it envisions and will enable the Commission's model policy development process to be grounded in consistent, comparable information. We have shared proposed amendment language with the bill sponsor and remain available to work collaboratively with the Committee to refine this legislation.

For the foregoing reasons, the Office of the Attorney General respectfully urges the Committee to give House Bill 1359 a favorable report with the amendment described above.

Cc: Members of the Committee