

From: [Wufoo](#)
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Organizational Affiliation, if any	Jews United for Justice
What district in Montgomery County do you live in? If you do not know, please see the County District Map *	District 5

Question/Comment for the Policing Advisory Commission *

Jews United for Justice (JUFJ)

Heidi Rhodes

Montgomery County, MD

www.jufj.org

Testimony to the Policing Advisory Commission

regarding Traffic Enforcement in Montgomery County, MD

January 9, 2023

My name is Heidi Rhodes and I live in Montgomery County District 5. I am testifying on behalf of JUFJ, which represents over 2,700 Jews and allies from across Montgomery County who, based on our shared values, work to advance economic and social justice and racial equity in our local community. JUFJ is working with and supporting a number of partners in our efforts to transform public safety, including Young People for Progress and Silver Spring Justice Coalition (SSJC).

Jewish tradition teaches us in the book of Psalms “blessed are they who observe justice, who do righteousness at all times.” Our current system is not just or righteous – therefore our tradition calls on us to do everything possible to mitigate police bias and the real harm it causes. To create true justice, we must change how traffic violations are enforced in Montgomery County.

The Office of Legislative Oversight (OLO) has found year after year there are significant disparities in police traffic interactions based on race and ethnicity in Montgomery County. (2020: “Local Policing Data”; 2021: “Moving Traffic Enforcement to the Department of Transportation (DoT)”; 2022: Memorandum on Analysis of Montgomery Traffic Violations Dataset.) These disparities illustrate how people of color are unfairly criminalized during traffic interactions with police. The data in these reports are relevant, powerful, and actionable. Most glaringly, in its 2022 report, the OLO stated that, “This memorandum report finds that while overall numbers of MCPD traffic stops declined between FY18 and FY22, racial disparities in traffic stops have persisted or worsened over the five-year period.”

In addition, these reports show that Black and Latinx drivers are stopped and searched during traffic stops for lower-level traffic violations (minor traffic violations, expired registrations or equipment issues) at disproportionately higher rates compared to white drivers. Montgomery County should prioritize traffic stops for dangerous driving behaviors rather than minor

violations.

JUFJ supports a vision of safety where armed law enforcement officers are not responsible for ensuring safe roads for drivers, pedestrians, and bikers. To that end, JUFJ joins our partners in calling for the following:

- Automating traffic enforcement, with oversight by Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) instead of the police department
- Limiting the types of traffic stops that officers can make
- Prohibiting traffic stops and car searches based solely on the odor of marijuana

We look forward to continuing to work with the Policing Advisory Commission, our elected officials, and our partners on this important issue.
