

The Safety and Traffic Equity in Policing (STEP Act) is an improvement in traffic enforcement that is necessary in Montgomery County. There is a disparity in enforcement of traffic violations that is predicated to Blacks, Hispanics but also those with mental disorders. The police constantly follow and evaluate these groups. While as one known to have a disorder, I don't have the worries of Blacks and Browns as far as being shot or searched, but I am still constantly on the scope of their radar.

The need to have new police recruits with training in equitable treatment of diverse populations which are inherent in Montgomery County is urgent. They need to have a basic understanding of psychology to identify those in a mental health crisis and respond differently.

I agree with the directive of not permitting searches of vehicles for a minor infraction without a prevailing reason. A search may be deemed necessary if there is an ongoing investigation currently predicated to this individual for a major infraction of the law.

Exceeding the speed limit and reckless driving are violations that must be enforced and have become more prevalent as a reaction to the Covid Pandemic and the restrictions incurred by the virus. Also drag racing and clown driving tactics are occurring more frequently and were initiated by an extreme reduction of traffic due to telework policy and closures across the spectrum.

An issue not addressed in the bill is the extreme danger pedestrians face when crossing busy intersections. An example of this is the crossing on East West HWY at the NOAA complex to the shopping center across the road which is endeavored with a crosswalk for pedestrians. Most traffic continues to speed by as pedestrians cross swiftly at risk for their lives on a crosswalk that provides no protection. When pedestrian safety is at risk, law enforcement needs to punish offenders. The action needed may be raising crosswalks and brightening its color for more prominence and adding a median pedestrian refuge island and a sensitized HALK signal.

I encourage the council to pass the STEP act and thank Council Member Jawando for introducing this vital legislation for traffic enforcement that provides an equitable solution for policing.