

Jane E. Redicker

April 25, 2023 – Via Email

Re: Bill 12-23, Police – Traffic Stops – Limitations -- OPPOSE

Dear Council President Glass and Members of the Council:

Today I write asking you to take no further action to enact Bill 12-23, which would prohibit Montgomery County Police from enforcing many of our traffic laws and limit their ability to continue getting guns off our streets and out of the hands of those who would do harm to our citizens.

As you are all aware, I am no longer with the Greater Silver Spring Chamber of Commerce. However, I remain a resident of Montgomery County (District 5) and I continue to be gravely concerned about public safety and the increased crime in our community.

One stated goal of the bill is to “promote safety,” but in reality, it does just the opposite. How is it safe to be on our streets where we encounter vehicles without working headlights, taillights, stop lamps and turn signals? The laws requiring that this vehicle equipment must be in working order were enacted for a reason and that reason is safety. Further, how does “legalizing” jaywalking, which this bill in essence does, “promote safety”?

My other concern is that this bill sends a message to the community that it’s ok to break certain laws. In the name of reducing racial disparities, we are going to just ignore certain laws. We’re not going to bother making sure that the person behind the wheel has a license. . .or that the vehicle is properly registered. . .or that the driver owns the vehicle he or she is driving. No matter how many times we’ve seen reports of stolen vehicles these days. How does this “promote safety”? How does it “further the County’s Vision Zero goals,” another stated purpose of the bill? And if it’s ok to ignore these laws, what’s next?

This bill further threatens public safety by limiting a police officer’s ability to get illegal guns and dangerous drugs off the street. Have the bill’s sponsors forgotten how many guns have been taken off the street as a result of traffic stops? And what about the recent stop that kept more than 2,000 Fentanyl pills out of the community. The driver, who was found to be operating the vehicle in violation of a learner’s permit, was stopped for a “minor traffic infraction,” and found with not only the Fentanyl, but also a loaded .45 caliber handgun. If Bill 12-23 had been enacted, that officer would not have been able to do the search that resulted in making our community safer. He might not have even been able to make the stop.

Oh, and not only would he have been limited in making the stop and searching for the drugs and the gun, but he would have been subject to being disciplined for doing his job and enforcing State law (the traffic violation), which Montgomery County had decided to ignore.

Nothing in Bill 12-23 promotes public safety or Vision Zero.

One final note: This morning, I reviewed the testimony on this bill that has been submitted online. What I saw was troubling and, I firmly believe, does not represent the views of most in our community. It certainly doesn't reflect what my neighbors posted when I expressed my concerns on Nextdoor Meadowood. To try to add some balance to what you will see on the Council website, I have provided their comments to my post below. Because I do not have the permission of those who I am quoting, I have not included their names. However, you may feel free to look at my original post and find them.

From Nextdoor:

- “Traffic violations are one of the key ways cops capture criminals for crimes already committed. It is another one of the soft on crime / defund police initiative, which has already plagued our community with high crime.”
- “I see where they're going and agree there's a problem, but this bill is moving everyone in the wrong direction. The idea is to be policing *fairly*, not *barely*.”
- “Problem is that fair policing would produce bad "equity" numbers, because violators aren't a random sample or representative cross-section of the population. What Jawando and Mink really want is quotas, but they can't get that. So the only way to get good equity numbers is to ignore violations. Funny thing is that the worst "equity" numbers are in the most serious offenses. So ignoring "minor" offenses actually makes the equity numbers worse. Whether Councilman Jawando is clever enough to grasp this, I don't know.”
- “Generally the more serious crimes get more attention and effort. This makes sense, up to a point. Resources are finite and we need to prioritize. Problem is that criminals usually start small, and they continue to commit small crimes even as they escalate to bigger ones. So cracking down on "minor" crimes is an effective way to prevent major ones as well. This is one reason the activist talking-point that police should "concentrate on serious crimes" is rubbish. (The fact that it would also make the equity numbers work is just a hilarious bit of irony.)”
- “Think about people turning on a dark night in front of you with that particular turn signal out. Are you going to be able to stop or slow with no warning...because they forgot haven't fix it? The bar keeps being lowered but it affects safety.?”
- “Sadly, elected leaders just do whatever they want. The whole county could come out against it and they will pass their nonsense and dangerous bills anyway.”
- “...let's people who are committing crimes know it's wide open, go ahead.”
- “All in the name of equity! Somehow it is now racist for the police to pull someone over for broken tail light or illegal tint!! We are a lost cause of a nation, we should just ignore each other from now on huh?”
- “That's ABSURD. Of course we need police to do their entire job. The bill should be tossed in the trash.”

Thank you for taking the time to read this. I hope you will continue to focus on real ways to improve public safety and take no further action to enact any part of Bill 12-23.

Jane Redicker