

Janeane Marks

April 19, 2023

Montgomery County Councilmembers
Stella Werner Council Office Building
100 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, Maryland 20850

Dear Montgomery County Councilmembers,

I am a resident of District 6 and live in the Aspen Hill area. I am writing to you today to request your unanimous support for the Safety and Traffic Equity in Policing (STEP) Act, Bill 12-23.

Racial disparities in traffic stops are a long-standing problem in Montgomery County. Over 20 years ago, the NAACP filed a complaint with the US Department of Justice alleging that the Montgomery County Police Department engaged in discriminatory traffic enforcement. According to the County Council's Office of Legislative Oversight (OLO), disparities in traffic enforcement persist and have even *worsened* in recent years.

Race-based disparities in the enforcement of low-level traffic infractions are frequently the result of pretextual traffic stops in which officers implicitly or explicitly hope that stopping a driver will yield evidence of criminal conduct, even though they don't have an independent legal basis to make a criminal stop. This often leads police to prolong stops by questioning drivers and pressuring them to consent to searches of their cars. This "stop and frisk" or "needle in the haystack" approach occasionally yields results but is extremely ineffective. In 2022, firearms were found in less than .5% of all traffic stops. These stops can be traumatic for targeted drivers and take away from enforcement of serious traffic offenses.

Jurisdictions and police departments around the country have passed a range of laws and policies similar to the STEP Act. This includes the states of Virginia and Oregon, as well as Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, San Francisco, Oakland, Los Angeles, Seattle, and Memphis.

Please vote YES for the STEP Act, Bill 12-23. Thank you.

Sincerely,
Janeane Marks