



Letter from the Montgomery County Young Democrats in Support of the STEP Act

July 10, 2023

Montgomery County Council
countycouncil@montgomerycountymd.gov
100 Maryland Avenue, 6th Floor
Rockville, MD 20850

Dear County Councilmembers,

The Montgomery County Young Democrats (MCYD) write in support of [Bill 12-23](#)—Police-Traffic Stops-Limitation, known as the Safety and Traffic Equity in Policing (STEP) Act. The STEP Act would limit and sometimes prohibit police officers from making stops for certain minor traffic offenses. It would help reimagine public safety, reduce systemic racism, and encourage police to focus on more urgent needs and more serious crimes.

Recently the Office of Legislative Oversight issued [a report on traffic enforcement and police interactions in Montgomery County](#). The report found “substantial disparities in police interactions by race and ethnicity” and “that Black and Latino drivers are stopped and searched during traffic violations at disproportionately higher rates than white drivers.” As a result, Black and Latino drivers are more likely to become trapped in the criminal justice system, to be incarcerated, or to be victims of police brutality. In many cases police officers stop drivers even if they are doing nothing wrong—and in some cases, these stops can go horribly wrong and leave someone dead.

The STEP Act would ban traffic stops by Montgomery County police officers based solely on suspected violations of the following offenses: licensing and registration, certificates of title of insurance, window tinting, defective headlights or taillights, illuminated license plates, minor obstructions like signs or posters on car windshields. It also bans traffic stops of people for suspected jaywalking. Furthermore, the STEP Act requires the county to collect data and information related to traffic stops and bans consent searches of cars by police officers (when an officer gets someone’s consent to search their vehicle).

Police officers should focus on solving serious crimes, responding to threats, and keeping Montgomery County residents safe. Traffic stops are often overused and unnecessary, and similar reforms have been implemented in places around the country. Berkeley, California has removed traffic enforcement from the police and assigned it to the transportation division. Places as varied as Oakland, Lansing, Fayetteville, Madison, and the state of Virginia have banned police officers from making stops for minor traffic offenses.

The STEP Act will reduce racial disparities in our criminal justice system, prevent people from going to prison, pressure police to focus on serious crimes, and in some cases, save lives. We urge you to favorably report Bill 12-23.

Please contact us at mocoyoungdems@gmail.com with any questions.

Sincerely,

The Montgomery County Young Democrats