

## TESTIMONY IN FAVOR OF THE FREEDOM TO LEAVE ACT (2/27)

Badger Martinez Fern

Hi there, my name is Badger and I live in the 6<sup>th</sup> district.

I come before you today show my unequivocal support for the Freedom to Leave Act in order to protect the rights of drivers.

Currently in Montgomery County a police officer can perform a “consent search” on drivers who provide their permission during traffic stops.

Consent searches sound reasonable, but the power police officers have over drivers makes it easy to coerce them into providing consent. For most of us, consenting is a survival tactic and not a choice. This is especially true for marginalized people, such as people of color and disabled drivers.

Consent searches rarely result in officers finding grounds to convict drivers, however they do extend interactions in what should otherwise be a normal traffic stop.

This bill would not only ban consent searches, it would prohibit police from extending traffic stops longer than absolutely necessary. This would codify every driver’s Freedom to Leave.

Personally, I believe that there should be a strong separation between criminal and traffic enforcement. There is a 1% that may actually be doing harm, but searching people's cars is not only a waste of everyone’s time, but is destined to be unequally enforced.

There is no inherent reason to search someone’s car for a traffic violation, and doing so will only make people further distrustful of the police.

Any suspected crime should have probable cause or a warrant, and not to be performed willy-nilly on random people. (arbitrarily)

Criminal enforcement should be kept out of traffic stops in order to keep interactions casual and efficient. Police resources can be better used in legitimate matters concerning community safety, rather than pointlessly searching the vehicles of a bunch of innocent and stressed people.

Thank you for your time, and I hope you have a good evening!

Extended interactions increase the likelihood of police violence against marginalized people.