

# It's Time to Prioritize Traffic Safety for All

Ending traffic stops for non-moving violations will increase safety and equity while refocusing needed resources on high-risk behavior.

## What the “Traffic Safety for All” bill does

This bill helps law enforcement officers focus on traffic stops related to road safety issues such as impaired/distracted driving and reckless driving.

The bill creates a pool of grant money for cities, counties, tribes, and nonprofits to create pilot programs that help people comply with the law and fix their vehicles to avoid low-level violations: repair vouchers, taillight installation workshops, helmet vouchers, fee waivers for expired tabs, etc. This solution-oriented fund ensures safer vehicles on the road, supports low-income drivers, including cyclists, and fixes vehicles to improve road safety.

At the same time, it will reduce disproportionate impacts on communities of color and low-income people, by reducing unnecessary low-level stops and other interactions that often lead to criminal system entanglement, debt, bankruptcy, and interpersonal violence. The bill prevents officers from pulling people over for equipment failures and expired tabs unless there's a safety risk. It also restricts irrelevant questioning and voluntary searches for low-level offenses while allowing officers to stop people for impaired driving, distracted driving, speeding and unrestrained passengers – the leading causes of traffic accidents.

These two facets of the bill will ensure law enforcement has capacity and resources to focus on issues of immediate safety on the roadways. A final component will provide more robust data collection on stops to better understand current conditions and help us evaluate the implementation of the bill's other provisions.

*“Everyone deserves to move safely and freely through the world, but too many Washingtonians lack access to safe transportation. As our state continues to see record-high traffic deaths caused by poor infrastructure and reckless driving, this bill will shift law enforcement’s focus to pressing safety issues while providing solutions to non-moving violations that move away from harmful punitive measures.” –  
Transportation Choices Coalition*

## Why this bill is critical

*“My son was killed over expired tabs. We have to ask ourselves, was it worth it? Is that a good use of police time? Getting stopped for something like that makes us question the officer’s motives, it makes us feel targeted. Did that traffic stop make anyone safer?” –  
Sonia Joseph, mother of Giovonn Joseph McDade*

Safety in transportation is a key concern for every community, but safety can mean different things to different groups of people. While we need to take action to prevent dangerous driving behaviors, low-level traffic stops have led to some people being targeted based on their perceived race, vehicle type, and driving location, and can lead to escalating interactions between community members and police.

Traffic stops are by far the most common interaction that people have with law enforcement. In Washington state, officers stop Black drivers disproportionately. Black, Latinx, Native American and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander drivers were searched at a rate up to 5x higher than white motorists even though officers are more likely to find weapons and drugs while searching the cars of white drivers. There is limited evidence that low-level traffic stops improve safety. A report conducted by

the Policing Project<sup>1</sup> assessing traffic stops and policing strategies in Nashville found no relationship between non-moving traffic stops and crime rates, either short-term or long-term.

<sup>1</sup> Policing Project, NYU School of Law, [An Assessment of Traffic Stops and Policing Strategies in Nashville.](#)

## Statewide and National Support for Traffic Safety for All

A.Philip Randolph Institute Seattle Chapter • ACLU of Washington • Alliance for Gun Responsibility • Asian Counseling and Referral Service • CAIR-WA • Carl Maxey Center • Center for Policing Equity • Clark County Justice Group • Columbia Legal Services • El Centro de la Raza • Food Lifeline • Futurewise • Greater Spokane Progress • Health and Justice Recovery Alliance • I Did The Time • Indivisible Kirkland • JUJustice Washington • King County Office of Law Enforcement Oversight • Law Office of Jackson Millikan, PLLC • Move Redmond • MyAdvocate

Next Steps Washington • Northwest Immigrant Rights Project (NWIRP) • OneAmerica • Pacific Islander Community Association of Washington • Peace & Justice Action League of Spokane (PJALS) • People Power WA • Proactive Persistent People for Progress (P4) • PROTECT17 • Revive Center For Returning Citizens • Riveters Collective • Riveters Collective - Justice System Committee • Seattle City Councilmember Teresa Mosqueda, • Showing Up for Racial Justice (Olympia Chapter) • Sisters in Solidarity • Spokane Community Against Racism (SCAR)

The National Police Accountability Project • Transportation Choices Coalition • UFCW 3000 • Unidos of Snohomish County • Urban Indians Northwest • Vashon Maury Showing Up for Racial Justice Criminal Justice Action Team • WA Partners for Social Change • Wallingford Indivisible • Washington Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers • Washington Coalition for Police Accountability • Washington Defender Association • Washington for Black Lives (WA4BL) • Washington Immigrant Solidarity Network (WAISN) • Whose Streets? Our Streets!

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*“This is about the freedom to get in your car and go out for skittles or head home from work in peace. My brother was killed by police when he was on his way to pick up his son from school. He was killed because they assumed he was dangerous – even though he was seat-belted in the car. Reducing traffic stops reduces the chances of using force, so everyone can go home safe at the end of the day. – Nickeia Hunter, sister of Carlos Hunter*

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*“For too long, Black drivers have been failed and harmed by a heavy-handed, discriminatory approach to policing that has come at the cost of real solutions that deliver safety. We now clearly see the effects of decades of disinvestment in road infrastructure paired with over-enforcement: egregious racial disparities in traffic crashes and stops alike. This legislation is an important step toward redesigning traffic safety to be more equitable and effective. Reforms to limit low-level, unnecessary traffic stops, invest in innovative unarmed response systems, and collect data to monitor progress will make roads safer for everyone—including for Black road users who live with heightened danger of police violence and crashes.” Center for Policing Equity*

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*“As a Black mother, I’m scared for my children each time they get on the road. I have educated them about how to act and what to do if they are stopped by police. But Black people have been hurt by police even when we do the right thing – when you’re reaching to get your wallet or insurance. We need to stop the unnecessary stops.” – Tonya Isabell, Washington Coalition for Police Accountability*

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