

March 19, 2024

Via E-Mail Delivery

Representative Kelly Moller, Chair
House Public Safety Finance and Policy Committee
200 State Office Building
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Re: Letter in Support of HF 1832 and in Opposition to Author's Amendment, DE 4

Chair Moller and members of the House Public Safety Finance & Policy Committee,

The Policing Project at NYU School of Law thanks you for the opportunity to submit this letter supporting HF 1832, sponsored by Representative Frazier, and opposing Author's Amendment DE 4. The Policing Project believes that meaningful public safety for everyone is possible only when the public and their elected representatives have access to policing data, allowing them to democratically create effective, evidence-based guidelines for police practices.¹ In some cases, policymakers need to convene working groups to study a problem before they can craft appropriate policies – but that is not the case with pretextual traffic stops. Ample evidence already exists demonstrating the extremely limited value of low-level traffic stops and the overwhelming benefits of directing police resources away from these stops and towards policing practices that truly improve public safety.

Traffic stops for low-level violations are usually ineffective and sometimes dangerous. Officers almost never find contraband when making low-level stops: one California study demonstrated that officers confiscated firearms in [only .03% of all stops](#).² Low-level stops also fail to turn up evidence of more serious crimes. A study conducted by the Policing Project in Nashville found that stops for non-moving violations led to serious criminal charges in [fewer than 1% of cases](#), even when stops were concentrated in “high crime areas.” These paltry benefits are enormously outweighed by the costs of such stops. Around [80 unarmed people are killed each year](#) during a traffic stop. Officers [cite](#) traffic stops as one of the most dangerous parts of their job, with [four officers killed](#) in 2022 alone. In addition to these dangers, low-level stops also make policing more difficult. Individuals who have recently been stopped are [significantly less likely to report](#) neighborhood problems to law enforcement.

Low-level traffic stops are also a major contributor to racial disparities in policing. Black drivers are [20% more likely](#) to be stopped nationwide than white drivers, and these racial disparities only

¹ As part of its mission to advance democratic accountability in policing, the Policing Project has created a number of model policies, all of which are informed by best practices in existing legislation and vetted by an advisory committee consisting of law enforcement officials, academics, police reform experts, and impacted community members. [Our comprehensive model statute curtailing pretextual traffic stops](#) was vetted through this process, and it forms the basis of our testimony today.

² The Policing Project will be happy to provide sources relied upon in this testimony upon email request.

get worse for low-level violations. For example, in 2019, the Sacramento County Sheriff's Office stopped Black drivers for non-moving violations at a rate [5 times higher](#) than white drivers. In Minnesota, these disparities are glaring. The Minnesota Department of Human Rights found that [54% of all stops](#) made by the Minneapolis Police Department were of Black drivers, and an astounding 78% of vehicular searches were of Black drivers.³ These numbers are wildly disproportionate in a city where Black residents make up only 19% of the population.

Limiting low-level traffic stops is a proven solution to all these problems. In 2021, Minneapolis Police Department voluntarily limited low-level stops for some of the same offenses enumerated in HF 1832, and in the same year, Ramsey County law enforcement leaders also limited low-level stops for many of the same offenses. In addition, Virginia and Oregon have already enacted such limitations statewide, as have numerous municipalities, including San Francisco, CA and Mecklenburg County, NC. In these and other jurisdictions, [traffic accidents and deaths fell](#) after restricting low-level stops, as officers were free to focus on the stops that actually impact roadway safety. In Connecticut, one town found [more drunk drivers](#) after local law enforcement shifted focus from minor equipment violations. Law enforcement officers have [recovered more contraband](#) and [firearms](#) after adopting low-level stop policies. And Black and Hispanic drivers experience far fewer [stops](#) and [searches](#) in jurisdictions that limit low-level stops. After Ramsey County began its restriction of low-level stops, officers recovered [just as many firearms](#) as before the policy was enacted, while reducing the disparities in stop rates of Black and White drivers.

Further study, as contemplated by DE 4 to HF 1832, is simply not required. HF 1832, as introduced, would reduce the number of unnecessary traffic stops that bear little relationship to public safety, allowing officers to focus on the stops that truly make our roadways safer. Continuing to study the problem will not make low-level stops more effective, or their downsides less harmful. The policy solution originally laid out in HF 1832 would bring the proven benefits of limiting low-level stops, currently enjoyed by some Minnesotans, to all residents of the state.

We thank the Committee and the Chair for their consideration of this bill, and urge members to reduce low-level stops now, without waiting for a working group to gather cumulative information proving what we already know: limiting low-level stops improves public safety.

Sincerely,

Kelly McConney Moore
Deputy Director of Legislative Initiatives

cc: Representative Cedrick Frazier (via email)

³ These disparate search rates are not just troubling but also unfounded in evidence: Black drivers are [less likely](#) than white drivers to be found with contraband when searched.