



March 19th, 2024

House Public Safety Finance and Policy Members
Chair Moller, Vice Chair Feist, and Ranking Minority Leader Novotny

Re: HF 1832 Frazier: Authority limited for peace officers to stop or detain drivers for motor vehicle equipment violations.

Dear Chair Moller and Members of the Committee:

The Justice for All Coalition is writing with concern regarding the lack of progress on ending low-level traffic stops this session. For the past three years plus years, the Minnesota Legislature has engaged in robust conversations on the disproportionate impact of these stops on Black, Brown, and marginalized communities. Multiple lives and families have been affected negatively as well, with the most extreme consequence being death. Numerous studies have been deliberated during committee hearings, and testimonies taken. We urge the committee to move forward swiftly and amend low-level traffic laws now.

Amendment DE3

While we acknowledge the amendment's establishment of a working group to develop recommendations on ensuring compliance for registration and taxes of motor vehicles, we assert that such groups are most effective when they incorporate a diverse range of community voices. We recommend expanding the workgroup to include organizations and communities impacted. This belief is grounded in our observations of similar working groups in jurisdictions across the country.

Amendment DE4

We stand in support of House File 1832, and therefore further support the expansive nature of DE4. Traffic stops are often the first point of contact between law enforcement and the public, and they carry significant risks, particularly for Black drivers who are disproportionately targeted for stops and searches. By curbing the use of pretextual stops, DE4 has the potential to reduce racial disparities in policing, optimize the allocation of law enforcement resources, and foster better, more trusting relationships between communities and law enforcement agencies.

The growing recognition of similar laws across the country underscores the importance of this issue. States like Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Michigan, as well as local jurisdictions like Ramsey County, have implemented measures to limit low-level traffic stops with promising results. For example, after Ramsey County's district attorney ceased felony prosecutions for minor traffic violations and local law enforcement limited certain stops, there was a significant decrease in both stops and searches, with no impact on contraband seizure rates.

The Justice for All Coalition is a collective of advocates, defendants, lawyers, social workers, leaders, and those who have firsthand experience with the criminal legal system pressing for or resisting reforms to seek meaningful legal system transformations that protect public safety while addressing and transforming those parts of the system that do more harm than good.



Moreover, data from communities with restricted traffic stops for secondary offenses show that law enforcement agencies can achieve better public safety outcomes by focusing on more serious crimes. Officers can enhance their effectiveness and improve overall safety on our roads by directing their attention to violations directly linked to road safety, such as speeding and driving under the influence.

We would like to extend our sincere appreciation to Chief Author Frazier for his leadership on this critical issue. His commitment to advancing fair and equitable policing practices is commendable, and we are grateful for his efforts in championing this bill.

In conclusion, the Justice for All Coalition believes that HF 1832 represents a critical opportunity to advance racial equity and justice in policing and incorporating DE4 into the bill is needed. We urge you to support this recommendation and help create a safer, more just Minnesota for all.

We kindly request your support on this bill.

Sincerely,
Justice for All Coalition

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