



**Testimony from DC Families for Safe Streets
for the joint public hearing from the Committees on
Transportation & the Environment and Public Works & Operations
held on Wednesday, October 4, 2023**

To the Committees on Transportation & the Environment and Public Works & Operations:

Thank you for holding this joint public hearing for the following bills: License Suspension Reform Amendment Act of 2023 (B25-0421); Automated Traffic Enforcement Effectiveness Amendment Act of 2023 (B25-0422); Strengthening Traffic Enforcement, Education, and Responsibility (“STEER”) Amendment Act of 2023 (B25-0425); and Fraudulent Vehicle Tag Enforcement Amendment Act of 2023 (B25-0435).

[DC Families for Safe Streets](#) is a group of over 80 survivors of traffic violence and families whose loved ones were either killed or severely injured on our streets. **We submit this testimony with tender acknowledgement that DC’s traffic fatalities for only nine months of 2023 have already surpassed all fatalities in 2022.** In fact, 2023 is on track to be the deadliest year since Vision Zero by 2024 was announced.

Traffic Fatalities as of October 4, 2023

- This Year: 38
- YTD Last Year: 25
- Percent Change: 52%

NOTE: The Traffic Safety and Specialized Enforcement Branch is also currently investigating four Special Circumstance Investigations in which motorists may have suffered from a medical emergency, resulting in their deaths. The actual crash may not have caused the death. These cases are not included in the traffic fatality count.

20-Year Traffic Fatality Trend

Year	'04	'05	'06*	'07	'08	'09	'10	'11	'12	'13	'14**	'15	'16***	'17	'18†	'19	'20++	'21	'22
Fatalities	45	49	43	54	39	33	25	32	19	29	26	26	28	30	36	27	37	40	35

Screenshot from [MPD’s “Traffic Data” webpage](#).

Zero is more than a goal for us. Zero means a mother will be at the dinner table; a community leader will continue to care for and work in service of her neighbors without carrying her own trauma; a colleague will make it to the office; a child will play with their friends again. Despite our own personal grief and trauma from traffic violence, we continue to speak up so others won't have to.

We know zero traffic fatalities can be achieved because other cities like [Hoboken, NJ](#), have achieved zero traffic fatalities for four consecutive years. In fact, the [United States is an outlier](#) among peer countries, where traffic fatalities have decreased. The District government can turn things around by enacting, funding, and enforcing safe street policies, while ensuring that DDOT implements safe street designs without pushback or delay.

We thank the Committees for listening to our testimonies throughout this year and the Councilmembers and their staffs for introducing legislation to continue to address dangerous and reckless driving. In our review of all four bills and their introduction letters, we ask the Council and their staffs **to use the word “crash” not “accident” in your work to write and update legislation.**¹ Traffic crashes are fixable problems, caused by dangerous streets and reckless drivers. They are not accidents, they are policy and engineering failures. Let's stop using the word "accident" today.

We support all proposed bills and offer the following specific comments:

Fraudulent Vehicle Tag Enforcement Amendment Act of 2023 (B25-0435)

- Lines 31-34: We suggest adding or making more explicit that vehicle tags are required on the front and rear of a vehicle (and only on the rear for motorcycles, mopeds, and trailers).
- Lines 64-65: [Temporary tags are valid for 45 days](#). We believe that displaying temporary tags expired for more than 60 days—which would be a total of 105 days before any action could be taken—is too long of a time period. There have been 14 traffic fatalities in the past 105 days. We suggest revising Line 64 from 60 days to 15 days.
- Lines 73-75: We are skeptical that the Mayor will establish and maintain a directory of all permanent and temporary tags issued, and the procedures for identifying tags as legitimate. The Mayor has been asked to lead on other items before—such as working with representatives from Maryland and Virginia on ticket reciprocity as directed by the Vision Zero Enhancement Omnibus Amendment Act of 2019—but [meaningful actions were not taken](#). We agree these efforts need to be taken and would welcome further revisions to ensure actions are meaningfully taken within the stated time frame.

¹ Learn more and take the pledge at www.CrashNotAccident.com. We also highly recommend the book “There Are No Accidents” by Jessie Singer (2023).

Automated Traffic Enforcement Effectiveness Amendment Act of 2023 (B25-0422)

- Lines 52-56:
 - We suggest that additional points be assessed for driving at faster and more dangerous speeds, such as assessing 1 point for 11 to 15 mph over the speed limit; 2 points for 16 to 20 mph over; and 3 points for more than 21 mph over the speed limit.
 - We wholeheartedly support an additional point for a violation in school zones. In the past two years alone, three children have been killed in or near school zones and others seriously injured and traumatized; this is unacceptable in the District of Columbia. We are also concerned that [recent legislation](#) narrowly defines a school zone as any street, block, or intersection within 350 feet of a school building; this does not protect kids on their way to school. As such, any moving violation within 350 feet of a school building seems severely egregious and may warrant more than one point.
 - We also suggest doubling the points to be assessed for larger vehicles, including but not limited to personal trucks and SUVs, but also freight, dump, delivery, and transit vehicles. [Large vehicles are more dangerous](#), especially for children. Since 2021, drivers of freight, dump, delivery, and transit vehicles in the District were involved in the fatal crashes of [Marion Fields](#), [Lee Perry-Davis](#), [Armando Martinez-Ramos](#), [James Turner](#), [Gregory Holloway](#), [Allison Hart](#), [Ronnie Lyons](#), [Demetrius and Amir Fultz](#), [Michael Gordon](#), [Shawn O'Donnell](#), [Joshua Richmond](#), [Chad Nieboer](#), and [Johnny Lee Harrington](#).
- Lines 78-86: We agree with these lines that the owner shall be presumed to be the operator of the vehicle at the time of violation. We believe that owners should take responsibility for their vehicle, even if someone else drives it.
- Lines 140+: We agree with the bill's amendment to tow or immobilize parked vehicles with moving violations or illegal tags. We would like the bill to go further and require towing of vehicles that are parked in bus and bike lanes. These vehicles not only obstruct the flow of public transit and bicycle travel but, more importantly, put bicycle riders at increased risk of death and severe injury when they are forced to swerve into vehicular traffic. We should treat cars parked in bike and bus lanes the same way we treat cars parked in vehicular travel lanes: tow them immediately.

License Suspension Reform Amendment Act of 2023 (B25-0421)

- We support the entire bill to suspend licenses and registrations for people who are [charged](#) with killing someone with a vehicle, leaving the scene of a crash, or driving under the influence. Many of our members feel a sense of injustice knowing that they have lost a loved one or contend with serious, life-altering injuries and medical bills—while the driver (if caught) rarely loses their privileges to continue to drive. If legal proceedings do move forward with the US Attorney's Office, many families find themselves in an arduous, retraumatizing, multi-year legal case before a conviction could be made. Additionally, we recommend that the bill go further and remove licenses from drivers involved in fatal crashes for a minimum 30-day period. Regardless of fault, the consequences of a fatal crash can be debilitating. Drivers involved in such crashes

should be required to have a mandatory “cooling off” period. Additional mobility services should be provided (e.g., transit credits, bikeshare credits, rideshare credits) during this period or beyond.

- We would also like to see this bill expanded to include victims that are seriously injured as a result of a crash. Some victims may survive a crash, but can live with debilitating, extremely life-altering injuries. We recognize that “serious injury” or a “major crash” might not have a formal definition or would be the best use for this case, but we recommend that the Council work with the DC Office of the Attorney General and the US Attorney to determine which charges could be used to trigger a potential license suspension.
- We also encourage the Council to consider mandating the use of [intelligent speed assistance \(ISA\) systems](#) as a means to begin to restore driving privileges. ISA is proven technology that prevents drivers from speeding and uses GPS technology to adjust to changing speed limits throughout travel. New York City recently concluded a successful [pilot program](#) on municipally-owned vehicles. This technology is similar to ignition interlock devices, which the [District already requires](#) for people with first or subsequent alcohol-related offenses. [Recently-proposed legislation in New York State](#) is also exploring requiring ISA devices to be installed for drivers who accumulate six or more speeding tickets in a year or 11 or more points on their license in 18 months. We would welcome something similar in the District.

Strengthening Traffic Enforcement, Education, and Responsibility (“STEER”) Amendment Act of 2023 (B25-0425)

- Lines 59-75: We request clarity on the definitions for immobilization-eligible offenses. As written, we are unsure if a driver with seven tickets for going over 1-10 mph over the speed limit AND one ticket for over 20 mph over the limit during a six month period would qualify for a license suspension or have their vehicle towed.
- We also reiterate our suggestion for the Council to consider mandating the use of ISA systems, as noted immediately above, as a means to begin to restore driving privileges, as a potential addition to a safety driving course.
- We are thankful for this bill’s efforts to address reciprocity between the District, Maryland, and Virginia, as well as efforts to facilitate better communication between the DC Superior Court and the Department of Motor Vehicles on DUI offenses.

It is past time for meaningful, stringent, enforced changes to the way we approach the privilege of driving in DC. Thank you for your work to prepare this package of traffic safety bills to curb dangerous and reckless driving.

This testimony is submitted in dedication to the 38 people who died due to traffic violence in the District this year. These names do not include the 5,000+ crash survivors whose lives have been forever changed. 2023 is on track to be the deadliest year since Vision Zero by 2024 was announced. There have been 297 traffic fatalities since Mayor Bowser announced Vision Zero in 2015.

- Carlos Enrique Christian, 24, from Northwest DC
- Andy Carino, 22, from Severna Park, MD
- James Timothy Tarrants, 66, from Northwest DC
- Eric Lyons, 49, from Northwest DC
- Wayne Brown Savoy, 63, from Southeast DC
- Mohammed Islam, 21, from Dorchester, MA
- Mohamed Kamara, 42, from Burtonsville, MD
- Jonathan Cabrera Mendez, 23, from Arlington, VA
- Olvin Torres Velasquez, 22, from Arlington, VA
- Brandon Johnson, 38
- Samuel Kesselman, 22, from Northwest DC
- Chantice Cole, 35, from Southeast DC
- Joshua Richmond, 27
- Rico Knight, 45, from Clinton, MD
- Tim Juan Mundell, 46, from Southeast DC
- Unidentified person
- Jin Park, 32
- William Lamont Walker, 50, from Southeast DC
- Rhyes Patrick-James Harris, 30, from Alexandria, VA
- Chad Nieboer, 49, from Northwest DC
- Carlos Aguiar, 43, from Northwest DC
- Milosha Stephens, 49, from Southeast DC
- Van Thomas Lee, 28, from Pittsburgh, PA
- Madison Jones, 19, from Northwest DC
- Dejuan George, 29, from Northeast DC
- Samuel Walker, 60, from Northeast DC
- Robert Hall, 49, from Northeast DC
- Unidentified person
- Bing Wong, 75, from Philadelphia, PA
- Jewel Regina Bazilio-Bellegarde, 68, from Silver Spring, MD
- Gatarua Stephen Gitu, 39, from Clinton, MD
- Unidentified person
- Marcus Hearn, 39, from Southwest DC
- Johnny Lee Harrington, 66, from Northeast DC
- Victor Serrano, 32, from Suitland, MD
- Unidentified person
- John Gibson, 34, from Greenbelt, MD
- Unidentified person