

April 13, 2023

The Honorable Anthony J. Portantino
Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee
1020 N Street, Room 412
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: SB 50 (Bradford) - Vehicle enforcement - SUPPORT

Dear Chair Portantino:

I write to express strong support for SB 50 (Bradford) which would make significant strides in establishing more equitable traffic enforcement in California by reducing racial disparities, ending practices that strip wealth from lower income communities, and allowing municipalities to design new traffic enforcement models, all while maintaining road safety.

Stopping people from driving in ways that endanger others is essential to road safety and building better cities. However, California's traffic laws go far beyond road safety and venture into equipment and other non-moving violations that often have more to do with a person's income than their driving behavior. These traffic stops provide little to no safety benefits and have a deep and disproportionate economic impact on Black and Latino people across California.

Data from police departments across California shows that minor traffic violations related to equipment or non-moving violations, like those included in SB 50, contribute to racial disparities in traffic enforcement. A SPUR analysis of Fresno, Los Angeles, Oakland, Sacramento, San Bernardino County, San Francisco, and San Jose traffic stops, found that in every site studied Black and Latino drivers were more likely to be stopped for equipment or non-moving violations than any other racial or ethnic group.¹ In each site studied, one of the top

¹ SPUR, "The High Cost of Traffic Stops", October 2022. Available at:
<https://www.spur.org/publications/research/2022-10-06/high-cost-traffic-stops>

three reasons Black drivers were stopped by police was for having their license plates displayed incorrectly, despite extremely low citation rates for this alleged violation.

Despite many of these minor traffic violations not resulting in a citation, the practice of pretext stops does contribute to a significant amount of fines and fees being levied on lower income communities and communities of color. California has some of the most expensive traffic citations in the country, which can saddle people with thousands of dollars in debt. These tickets are particularly concerning when they have nothing to do with road safety and disproportionately impact Black and Latino drivers. In 2019, Oakland drivers were ticketed for an estimated \$1.2 million for having their license plates improperly displayed. In Los Angeles, traffic citations for an expired registration cost Black and Latino drivers an estimated \$6.8 million. Each year, millions of dollars that could go to paying for necessities such as food or housing are instead taken from lower-income communities for minor traffic violations. SB 50 would curtail these practices and help lower-income drivers become more economically secure by avoiding these fines and fees.

SB 50 would also serve an important function in allowing municipalities to experiment with new traffic enforcement models. As many municipalities across the country have moved to deprioritize enforcement of minor traffic violations, there is now a need for the development of alternative enforcement models that can achieve more equitable outcomes. Empowering cities to serve as policy laboratories will allow California to develop the most effective enforcement models - that both improve road safety and promote equity.

For the reasons above, we urge you to support SB 50 and help build a more equitable and just traffic enforcement system.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jacob Denney', with a stylized, looping flourish at the end.

Jacob Denney

Economic Justice Policy Director

SPUR