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The Free2Move Coalition Calls for an End to CPD’s use of harmful, excessive, and ineffective pretextual traffic stops

CHICAGO— Yesterday the Free2Move Coalition called on Chicago’s local officials to end the Chicago Police Department’s rampant use of harmful, excessive, and inefficient pretextual traffic stops.

At a press conference Chicago Alderpeople, impacted individuals, advocacy groups, District Councilors, and other stakeholders united at City Hall to join the chorus of voices calling for change to the Department’s ineffective and discriminatory traffic stops practice.

Alderman Daniel La Spata, Chair of the Committee on Pedestrian and Traffic Safety, explained, “The data, CPD’s data, is incontrovertible. In 2022, more than 500,000 pretextual traffic stops...We’re talking about more than 60% of those for nonmoving violations. We’re talking about an infinitesimal percentage of those actually resulting in citations or crime. This is surely a painful, uncomfortable conversation for the City Council to have, for a lot of reasons, but it would be irresponsible of us not to have this conversation today.”

Patricia Jjemba, Director of Legislative and External Affairs for the Cook County Public Defender, explained how the high number of traffic stops impact their clients: “CPD officers target poor neighborhoods and wait for Black and Latinx drivers to commit minor traffic violations—or outright fabricate violations as justification to pull these drivers over... Drivers and passengers are harassed, bullied, taunted, and pulled out of their vehicles in the most violent and humiliating ways.”

Speakers also described how trust between communities and law enforcement cannot be built until this practice changes. Jackie Baldwin, Director of Antiracism and Equity at the Jewish Council on Urban Affairs, said “I’m here to tell you as a 60-year-old who’s lived in Chicago all my life that we’re not restoring trust because trust has never existed. And it is not going to exist until we make an active demand and an active effort on the part of City Council to change these policies starting right now.”

Following the press conference, the Free2Move coalition testified at the Chicago City Council Committee on Traffic and Pedestrian Safety subject matter hearing on traffic stops. The presentation included [testimony from people](#) who have experienced harmful traffic stops by CPD, data showing how widespread and ineffective the issue is, and an explanation of the Coalition’s proposed [three key policy solutions](#). To address the problem, the Coalition is calling for an end to pretextual stops, a limit on traffic stops for low-level offenses that do not impact traffic safety, and an end to suspicionless consent searches during traffic stops that subject targeted drivers to fishing expeditions. The [Coalition’s presentation to the Committee](#) to the Committee can be found on the website, Free2MoveChi.org.

Malik Cole, a Westside Chicagoan, shared his experience being stopped as a passenger in a car with his friend: “It might be a simple stop to somebody else, but to us, you feel nervous because you’ve seen so many Black people not walk away with their life.”



Alderman Desmon Yancy and Alderwoman Jessie Fuentes each shared accounts of their own stops by Chicago police. Alderman Yancy explained that last summer he was pulled over twice within the same week for a minor equipment violation. He emphasized the message these types of stops send to his constituents about where CPD's priorities lie: "I was overly concerned that when I look at what some Woodlawn residents would perceive as a lack of response from police or what some would say this is a neighborhood that has different public safety needs than stopping people for not having a license plate—it felt like an imposition and less of an opportunity to build community support or provide some mechanism of safety in the city."

Supporters of the Free2Move Coalition also called on the Community Commission for Public Safety and Accountability (CCPSA) to address pretextual stops during the CCPSA's monthly meeting on November 13. District Councilor David Orlikoff from the 14th District said, "our communities are frankly fed up with police not responding to 911 calls for over 30, 45, or more than 60 minutes. They do not want CPD to use their tax dollars for racially discriminatory stops for low level offenses. They want rapid responses to 911 calls and maintained readiness and enforcement of actual public dangers, such as reckless driving, rather than missing license plate lights." These and other comments echo the Coalition's call on the CCPSA to create CPD policy to end the use of pretextual traffic stops, limit stops for low-level offenses, and end suspicionless consent searches during traffic stops. The [Coalition's letter to the CCPSA](#) is available on the website, Free2MoveChi.org.

Whether walking, biking, or driving, Black and Latine people in Chicago are stopped by the police for traffic offenses at higher rates than their white neighbors, a practice that has rapidly escalated in recent years. Pretextual traffic stops are used as CPD's response to crime, but the [data](#) shows these stops produce minimal numbers of arrests and contraband recovery and are a waste of Department resources. Widespread stops concentrated in communities of color lead to distrust of police, and we have seen time and again how stops can escalate, leading to harm and in some cases, death.

To provide district-level data about how traffic enforcement impacts each Chicago neighborhood, the Coalition also recently released the [Free2Move CPD Traffic Stops Data Dashboard](#), which shows traffic stop data for each police district and police beat in the city.

The Free2Move Coalition is an alliance of community and advocacy organizations working to create a safer, more racially equitable system of traffic safety in Chicago. The work of the Coalition began in 2021 when a few community and advocacy organizations rallied around alarming issues with Chicago's current traffic safety system. The Coalition's work centers around crafting a system of traffic safety that works for everyone but especially those who have been most impacted by discriminatory police enforcement. To read more about our data, findings, and recommendations visit www.Free2MoveChi.org.

