



Mecklenburg County Sheriff's Office

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MEDIA ALERT FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Mecklenburg County Eliminates Regulatory Stops for Non-Moving Violations in an Effort to Enhance Community Safety

(Charlotte, NC) – On September 19, 2022, the Mecklenburg County Sheriff's Office (MCSO) adopted a new policy to end regulatory stops for non-moving violations in its most recent amendment to the MCSO Uniform Traffic Enforcement Policy.

According to the new policy, deputies may charge a driver with regulatory offenses *only* after having stopped a vehicle for a more serious and/or potentially hazardous violation; however, *regulatory offenses cannot be the sole basis for a traffic stop*. Examples of regulatory offenses include financial responsibility violations (i.e. no insurance), vehicle inspections violations, certain driver's license violations such as driving while license revoked, certain vehicle equipment violations such as improper mufflers, non-working head and rear lamps, window tinting, and a number of other non-moving violations enumerated in the policy. MCSO is requiring deputies to acknowledge receipt of the [new policy](#) and successfully pass an exam that specifically tests deputies on their knowledge of the recent changes.

Additional information: In an effort to address the racial disparities that are apparent in traffic stops in North Carolina, Forward Justice and the North Carolina Second Chance Alliance - Mecklenburg County Chapter presented the proposal to eliminate non-safety-related regulatory traffic stops to Mecklenburg County Sheriff Garry L. McFadden and his staff. During the presentation, Forward Justice attorneys emphasized how racial disparities are reinforced by investigative and regulatory stops. *Their data showed that although traffic stops are the most common police interaction, in North Carolina, Black people are about 22 percent of the population yet 30 percent of traffic stops. Comparatively, white people are 69 percent of the population but 60 percent of traffic stops – making Black drivers 95 percent more likely to be*

stopped. Additionally, data from the UNC School of Government Criminal Innovation Lab shows that [of the top 10 most charged offenses in Mecklenburg County, 5 of them are regulatory in nature.](#)

Senior Criminal Justice Counsel for Forward Justice, Whitley Carpenter stated, “Traffic stops can lead to harmful, and sometimes deadly interactions, particularly for people of color. By eliminating traffic stops for these low-level infractions that do not contribute to public safety, we can begin to minimize unnecessary and potentially harmful interactions between law enforcement and communities and address the racial disparities clearly inherent in these stops.”

Forward Justice also utilized data from [NCCopWatch.org](#), a web platform that presents data collected by the NC State Bureau of Investigation (NC SBI) related to all known traffic stops to have occurred in North Carolina since January 2002, to explain that while Black people make up only 30.8 percent of people living in Mecklenburg County, they make up 47.7 percent of the area’s traffic stops. A simple solution was proposed: to eliminate non-moving and non-safety-related regulatory traffic stops. MCSO attorneys worked with Forward Justice attorneys over the following months to develop, draft, and adopt this new policy for Mecklenburg County Sheriff’s Office.

“Exercising appropriate discretion in the enforcement of our laws is one of the greatest challenges and one of the greatest responsibilities of any law enforcement officer. It is the intention of this new policy to encourage Mecklenburg County Sheriff’s Deputies to focus on the most serious and potentially dangerous traffic offenses, while treating all drivers in and through Mecklenburg County equally under the law. MCSO also wants to be intentional in ensuring that none of our policies or practices contribute to disproportionality in our criminal justice system and I am confident that our community will be better served as a result,” **said Sheriff McFadden.**

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