SAFTE NY

Safe and Fair Traffic Enforcement New York

SAFTE NY is a coalition committed to changing law in New York to end racial disparities in traffic enforcement and make our roads and communities safer.

Why are we focused on traffic enforcement?

There are stark racial disparities in who gets stopped and who gets searched in low-level, non-safety traffic stops. One type of non-safety stop people are familiar with is pretext stops.

A pretext stop is a stop of a pedestrian, bicyclist or motorist for a low-level, non-safety violation of the Vehicle and Traffic Law. They are described as "pretext stops" because often while the stop is lawful, the real reason for the stop is something else, like a hunch or suspicion or bias that is not a legal basis to stop someone. In legislation, these stops are sometimes referred to as secondary stops.

Secondary stops don't improve public and road safety

- Studies show that secondary stops rarely result in the discovery of guns or other contraband. A 2018 study conducted in Nashville showed that less than 1% of low-level, non-moving traffic stops resulted in the arrest or citation of someone for possessing a weapon.
- In addition, eliminating or reducing secondary stops does not limit the police from stopping driver for safety violations, such as speeding. From 2015 to 2019, the police department in Newington, Connecticut reduced their stops for low-level, non-safety stops. This resulted in a 250% increase in stops that resulted in a DUI arrest.

Sources:
NYU School of Law, "An Assessment of Traffic Stops and Policing Strategies in Nashville."
Condon, Tom. "After a poor start, CT's anti-racial profiling effort is making progress" CT Mirror (January 30, 2022).

Read the Empire Justice Center report on pretext stops here.

Secondary stops cause harm

Studies show that:

- There are stark racial disparities in who gets stopped and who gets searched;
- Secondary stops cause harm to those stopped and the communities in which they live;
- Secondary stops have a negative impact on mental health and educational outcomes

Sources:
Epp, Charles et al. *Pulled Over: How Police Stops Define Race and Citizenship.*
Stagoff-Belfort, Aaron et al. "The Social Costs of Policing."

Communities are taking action

- Changing policies in police departments, and prosecutors' offices, and changing the laws in local and state governments can reduce the harmful impact of these stops.
- Some states and cities, such as Connecticut, Oregon, Virginia, Washington, Philadelphia, and Pittsburgh have begun to implement laws to study and reduce the harmful impacts of secondary stops.

For more information on our work on secondary stops, call/email us:

- Jill Paperno - jpaperno@empirejustice.org, (585) 295-5739
- Katie Blum - kblum@empirejustice.org, (585) 295-5825