

FREE TO WALK WASHINGTON

End harmful jaywalking enforcement, protect pedestrians

In the 1920s, automotive companies introduced the term “jaywalking” as part of their effort to shift the blame for pedestrian deaths from drivers to walkers. Today, jaywalking enforcement disproportionately impacts people of color and unhoused individuals; doesn't protect people from getting hit by cars; and is an inefficient use of public resources.

That's why we're asking Washington State Legislators to end harmful jaywalking enforcement. An updated [SB 5383](#) would protect pedestrians from being stopped by police unless they create an immediate danger to themselves or others. These changes would only apply to roadways of 35 MPH or less.

Better infrastructure, not punishment, will protect people walking and rolling.

Study after study has shown that investing in infrastructure and street design that prioritize safety over speed is what actually reduces pedestrian injuries and fatalities. Pedestrian deaths and injuries are increasing — but from factors like high speeds and distracted driving, not jaywalking. And in states and jurisdictions where jaywalking has already been decriminalized, preliminary data shows it has had no discernable impact on pedestrian safety.

Jaywalking enforcement disproportionately impacts unhoused people and people of color.

Our research has found that across Washington, Black pedestrians are stopped by police for jaywalking at an average rate approximately four times that of their share of the population, and unhoused residents represent nearly half of those impacted by jaywalking stops. Jaywalking is often used for pretextual stops, and can lead to escalating and dangerous encounters. Citations can also lead to further harms: the cost of a ticket can have outsized financial impacts, and court involvement can lead to collections, deportations, or impacts to employment.

Jaywalking enforcement is an inefficient use of public resources.

In a time when police departments are struggling to meet the needs of the communities they serve, it only makes sense to focus police resources on high-priority safety issues, rather than jaywalking.

All Washingtonians deserve to be “Free to Walk.” It's time for Washington to join places like [California](#), [Nevada](#), [Virginia](#), [Anchorage](#), [Denver](#), and [Kansas City](#) in addressing the harms of jaywalking enforcement. Join us at [FreetoWalkWA.org](#)