



**INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATIONS
DIVISION**

Report Concerning the Police-Involved Death in
Howard County on January 17, 2026

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Declination Report Concerning the Police-Involved Death of a Juvenile Female on January 17, 2026

The Independent Investigations Division of the Maryland Office of the Attorney General (the “IID”) is charged with investigating “police-involved incidents that result in the death of individuals or injuries likely to result in death.”¹ If the Office of the Attorney General determines that the investigation provides sufficient grounds for prosecution, then the IID “shall have exclusive authority to prosecute the offense.”²

I. Investigation Summary

On January 17, 2026, the IID began an investigation of a police-involved fatal vehicle collision occurring in Columbia, Maryland and involving both a Howard County Police Department (HCPD) officer and a juvenile female. The IID’s investigation focused exclusively on potential criminal culpability relating to the subject officer’s conduct. During the investigation, the IID obtained evidence, including police radio transmissions, dispatch records, police and EMS reports, police body-worn camera footage, photographs, department policies, a crash investigation report, and an autopsy report.³ Based on that evidence, the IID has made the following factual findings.

In the early morning hours of January 17, 2026, the subject officer, HCPD Police Officer First Class (Pfc.) Brian Maurantonio,⁴ was sitting in his unmarked police cruiser conducting traffic enforcement on northbound U.S. Route 29 (U.S. 29) near Johns Hopkins Road in Columbia, Maryland. At 1:47 a.m., a Honda Accord drove past Pfc. Maurantonio. Using a laser speed detector, Pfc. Maurantonio determined the Honda was traveling approximately 84 mph. The speed limit for that section of U.S. 29 is 55 mph.

Pfc. Maurantonio pulled onto the road and accelerated his cruiser to catch up to the Honda, driving approximately 1.5 miles on U.S. 29 until he exited onto eastbound MD Route 32 (MD-32). During this time, Pfc. Maurantonio’s cruiser reached speeds up to 122 mph, although he slowed down to approximately 84 mph when he drove through the intersection of U.S. 29 and Rivers Edge Road.

Approximately ten seconds after entering onto MD-32, Pfc. Maurantonio caught up to the Honda and activated his emergency lights. At that time, his cruiser’s speedometer displayed 124 mph. Pfc. Maurantonio’s in-cruiser speed detector showed the Honda was traveling over 100 mph. Three seconds later, Pfc. Maurantonio radioed dispatch that the Honda was failing to stop.

¹ Md. Code, State Gov’t § 6-602 (c)(1).

² Md. Code, State Gov’t § 6-604 (a)(1).

³ Compelled statements by subject officers may not be relied upon in criminal prosecutions due to the subject officers’ Fifth Amendment rights. If any compelled statements exist in this case, they have not been considered in the IID’s investigation. Further, the subject officer did not make a statement to the IID in this case, which had no impact on the prosecutorial decision.

⁴ Officer Maurantonio has been employed by HCPD since July 2021. He is a White male who was 25 years old at the time of the incident.

Pfc. Maurantonio continued to pursue the Honda, increasing his cruiser's speed to 130 mph. While driving behind the Honda, Pfc. Maurantonio maintained control of his cruiser and did not change lanes. At that time, the weather was clear, the road was dry, and there was minimal traffic on MD-32. Fifteen seconds after initially contacting dispatch, Pfc. Maurantonio radioed that he was canceling the attempted traffic stop due to the high rate of speed and he began to rapidly decelerate his cruiser. A few seconds after terminating the pursuit, Pfc. Maurantonio notified dispatch that the Honda had crashed while attempting to take the exit ramp to Broken Land Parkway.⁵ The exit ramp to Broken Land Parkway is approximately .8 miles from where Pfc. Maurantonio initially attempted to stop the Honda on MD-32.

Pfc. Maurantonio exited his cruiser and withdrew his department issued firearm as he stood by the driver's side door. He requested back up and emergency medical services (EMS) to respond. Shortly thereafter, witness officers arrived on scene. As the officers approached the Honda, which had overturned in a ditch, they identified themselves as police and ordered the occupants to show their hands. There was no response. Pfc. Maurantonio then notified dispatch that the Honda was on fire. The officers unsuccessfully attempted to put out the fire while waiting for the Howard County Fire Department (HCFD). Once HCFD arrived, they extinguished the fire. At that time, investigators found a single occupant in the Honda, a juvenile female, "D.H.G."⁶, who was the driver. D.H.G was pronounced dead on the scene.

On January 17, 2026, the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (the "OCME") performed an autopsy on D.H.G. The Medical Examiner determined that D.H.G. died from head injuries sustained when her vehicle struck a tree. The manner of death was ruled an "Accident."⁷ The Medical Examiner further determined that burns covering a majority of D.H.G's body were sustained after her death. D.H.G. also tested negative for both drugs and alcohol.

The Howard County Department of Police General Orders OPS-48 outlines protocols for vehicle pursuits. Officers must prioritize the safety of the public and the involved officers at all times during a vehicle pursuit. When engaging in a pursuit, officers must have emergency equipment activated. The protocols provide factors officers should consider when deciding whether to start and/or discontinue a pursuit, including reasons for the pursuit, vehicle speeds, road conditions, traffic conditions, officer safety concerns, and likelihood that the vehicle or driver can be identified and apprehended at a later time. Officers may pursue a vehicle for minor traffic violations involving an unknown suspect if risk factors for the pursuit are low. Low risk factors include clear weather, dry roads, effective radio communications, and light traffic. Although

⁵ The Maryland State Police completed a Crash Investigation Report. The report's results were consistent with this report's description of the crash.

⁶ D.H.G., the decedent, was under 18 years old at the time of the collision. She was a Hispanic female who lived in Ellicott City, Maryland. D.H.G is referred to by her initials in accordance with juvenile privacy laws.

⁷ Manner of death is a classification used to define whether a death is from intentional causes, unintentional causes, natural causes, or undetermined causes. The Maryland Office of Chief Medical Examiner uses five categories of manner of death: natural, accident, suicide, homicide, and undetermined. "Accident" applies when injuries caused the death in question and there is little or no evidence that the injuries occurred with the intent to harm or cause death. These terms are not considered a legal determination, rather they are largely used to assist in the collection of public health statistics. "A Guide for Manner of Death Classification," First Edition, National Association of Medical Examiners, February 2002.

HCPD General Orders do not have protocols for officer actions prior to initiating a traffic stop, based on witness interviews, the general practice provides that officers should consider whether actions necessary to attempt a traffic stop are reasonable, weighing the risks to the public in catching up with the offending vehicle to conduct a traffic stop.

After completing its investigation and evaluating all available evidence, the Office of the Attorney General has determined that the subject officer did not commit a crime under Maryland law. Accordingly, the Office of the Attorney General has declined to prosecute the subject officer in this case. The legal analysis explains why the Office of the Attorney General will not bring charges under the relevant Maryland statutes.

II. Legal Analysis

After a criminal investigation is complete, prosecutors must determine whether to bring criminal charges against someone. When making that determination, prosecutors have a legal and ethical duty to charge a person with a crime only when they can meet the State's burden of proof; that is, when the available evidence can prove each element of the alleged offense beyond a reasonable doubt.

The relevant offense that was considered in this case is criminally negligent manslaughter by vehicle.⁸ To convict a defendant of criminally negligent manslaughter by vehicle, a prosecutor must prove beyond a reasonable doubt that the defendant drove a motor vehicle in a criminally negligent manner and in doing so, caused the death of another person.⁹ Criminal negligence requires proof that the defendant "should have been aware, but failed to perceive that his or her conduct created a 'substantial and unjustifiable risk' to human life and that the failure to perceive that risk was a 'gross deviation' from the standard of care that a reasonable person would exercise."¹⁰ Where alleged negligence involves a law enforcement officer, the "reasonable person" perspective is replaced with a "reasonably prudent police officer" perspective, which must account for the fact that an officer on duty is permitted to violate some traffic laws under certain circumstances.¹¹ In determining whether an officer's actions constitute criminal negligence, the totality of the circumstances must be considered, including relevant factors such as department policy, use of warning devices, traffic conditions, speed, yielding to traffic signals, and erratic driving.¹²

Applying these principles here, prosecutors must analyze the subject officer's decision to try to stop the Honda and his actions while his cruiser was in motion. Regarding the decision to initiate a stop of the Honda, the subject officer recorded the Honda driving approximately thirty miles per hour over the posted speed limit, a traffic violation considered reckless driving in Maryland. The subject officer's decision to initiate a traffic stop on the Honda was within his legal authority. Although the subject officer drove at high speeds to catch up to the Honda, risk factors

⁸ Md. Code, Criminal Law § 2-210.

⁹ MPJI-Cr 4:17.10 (3d ed. 2024).

¹⁰ For a more detailed discussion of the different negligence standards, see [this opinion](#) written by the Office of the Attorney General. 96 Md. Op. Atty. Gen. 128 (2011).

¹¹ *Boyer v. State*, 323 Md. 558, 589 (1991).

¹² *See, e.g., Boyer*, 323 Md. at 591; *Taylor v. State*, 83 Md. App. 399, 404 (Ct. Sp. App. Md. 1990).

at the time were low, including minimal traffic, clear roads, and dry weather conditions. Further, the subject officer maintained control of his cruiser and took measures to lower the risks to the public while catching up to the Honda, including staying in one lane and significantly decelerating when driving through an intersection. Accordingly, there is insufficient evidence to prove that the subject officer's decision to catch up to the Honda in an effort to initiate a traffic stop created an unjustifiable risk that was a gross deviation from the reasonable standard of care.

Likewise, the subject officer pursued the Honda, which was already traveling at a high rate of speed, when the risk factors, including the time of day, traffic density, weather, and road conditions, were low. While pursuing the Honda, the subject officer, consistent with HCPD policies and training, activated his emergency lights, maintained control of his cruiser, and remained in one lane. Moreover, the subject officer's radio communications establish that, just seconds into the pursuit, he terminated the pursuit on his own after a short distance due to the continued high speeds and the potential safety risks associated with those speeds. Accordingly, there is insufficient evidence to prove that the subject officer's actions during the pursuit created an unjustifiable risk that was a gross deviation from the reasonable standard of care. Thus, we cannot prove that the subject officer was criminally negligent.¹³

Given the totality of the circumstances, there is insufficient evidence to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that the subject officer acted in a manner that created a substantial and unjustifiable risk to human life during the pursuit. Further, we cannot prove the subject officer failed to perceive an unjustifiable risk to human life in a manner that constituted a gross deviation from the reasonable standard of care.¹⁴ Accordingly, the Office of the Attorney General will not charge the subject officer with criminally negligent manslaughter by motor vehicle in this case.

III. Conclusion

This report has presented factual findings, legal analysis, and conclusions relevant to the January 17, 2026, police-involved vehicle collision in Columbia, Maryland that resulted in the death of D.H.G. The Office of the Attorney General has declined to pursue charges in this case because, based on the evidence obtained in its investigation, we cannot prove beyond a reasonable doubt that the subject officer committed a crime.

¹³ Because there is insufficient evidence to establish that the subject officer acted with criminal negligence, this report does not analyze whether the subject officer caused the death of the decedent.

¹⁴ Because prosecutors could not prove that the subject officer drove in a criminally negligent manner, we could not prove the more severe charge of manslaughter by vehicle, which requires a prosecutor to prove that the defendant drove with gross negligence, a level above criminal negligence.