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HB1215—Vehicle Emissions Inspection Program—Exemptions—Vehicles with Low Annual Mileage

HB1215 is similar in nature to HB0052 filed in the 2019 Session. In a nutshell, the bill allows a mix of self-reporting and on-site reporting for low-mileage vehicles (driven less than 2,500 miles per year).

Several modifications have been made since introducing the original bill.

First, the title given to the bill is actually misleading, as the bill doesn't create an exemption, just provides for self-reporting.

Second, the threshold for reporting was reduced from 5,000 to 2,500 miles.

Third, since these vehicles are driven for so few miles annually, it allows them to self-report for 2 consecutive reporting cycles and then report to a VEIP inspection station in the third cycle (6th year). I believe that this actually reduces pollution from being emitted into our atmosphere. In the 2019 Legislative Session, I provided testimony that the EPA estimates that, on average, 411 grams of Carbon Dioxide (CO₂) are emitted per mile driven, or about 8,887 grams of CO₂ per gallon of gasoline burned. It is not uncommon to burn several gallons of fuel, especially in the rural areas, to reach an inspection station. So, on these low-mileage vehicles, the question we need to ask ourselves is: "Are we actually creating pollution by forcing low-mileage cars to drive to a testing site?" This approach also addresses the issue raised by MDOT that owners may not always be truthful when self-reporting.

In speaking with MDOT, the possibility of vehicles having the ability to remotely report in the future was discussed. MDOT believes that within a couple of years, they will have the ability to accept data remotely, as several other states do currently. The bill, therefore, does not apply to vehicles that have on-board computers that have the ability to transmit emissions diagnostics data remotely (generally post-2005 vehicles).

Fourth, this Committee voted favorably on HB0133 – Vehicle Emissions Inspection Program – Deployed Military Personnel – Exemption, and this bill was subsequently passed by the House on Thursday, February 27, 2020 by a vote of 134–0. So, passage of HB0133 addresses last year's concern about exemptions potentially being a violation of Federal law; nor did MDOT believe that self-reporting would be a violation.

As I stated last year, self-reporting as it relates to usage of the vehicle is more relevant than those current exemptions relating to age or disability.

Fiscal Note. Last year, DLS estimated that an additional 20%, or 347,425 vehicles annually, would qualify for the new exemption. At \$14.00 per test, the result was an estimated \$4.8 million reduction in gross testing fee revenue. The fiscal note for HB1215 estimates a possible fee revenue reduction of \$170,000 in the non-reporting years and \$43,000 in the reporting year – a significant change from last year's fiscal note. However, I do not have a revised fiscal note on the amended bill. As originally drafted, the language removes the current exemption for disabled and age 70 and over, which is clearly not my intent.

For these reasons, I thank you and I ask for a favorable report on HB1215.