



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Chair Barve and Vice Chair Stein
House Environment and Transportation Committee
House Office Building Room 251
Annapolis, MD 21401

March 11, 2021

Re: House Bill 699 – Motor Vehicles - Driver's License and Insurance Offenses – Penalties

Dear Chairman Barve, Vice Chair Stein, and Committee Members,

This letter is sent to the committee regarding the recent amendment to House Bill 699 that seeks to decriminalize poverty by repealing incarceration as a penalty for driving with an invalid license or without auto insurance.

The amendment was crafted for the purpose of taking into account all of MDOT's concerns regarding public safety. MDOT noted that the bill, as drafted, risked removing the deterrent and penalties associated with drunk driving, reckless, negligent, aggressive, or other dangerous acts committed while driving. I am in agreement with exempting egregious driving violations from the bill - especially driving practices that directly harm Maryland residents.

House Bill 699 is not designed to remove accountability for those with actual driving violations. The intention of HB699 is to prevent the incarceration and accumulation of hefty fines for those who cannot afford the inflated cost of auto insurance or have invalid licenses for the purposes of non-driving related debts (e.g. child support).

The amendment exempts from the provisions of HB699 ALL driving violations related to [§21-901.1](#), [§21-901.2](#), or [§21-902](#) of the Maryland Transportation Article. These driving offenses include, but are not limited to: drunk driving, driving under the influence (DUIs), driving while impaired (DWI), reckless, negligent, dangerous, and aggressive driving. For those who are found guilty of the stated violations, the penalties remain the same as is in current state law: a maximum of a \$1000 fine, 1 year in jail, or both for the *first* offense. Although I am still concerned with the assumption that a violator of this provision has access to \$1000 and the possible penalties for inability to pay, I do not want these violations - especially drunk driving - to interfere with the bill's stated purpose to decriminalize poverty.

I would be happy to answer any questions the committee might have.

Sincerely,

Delegate Debra M. Davis
District 28, Charles County