
March 4, 2026

The Honorable William C. Smith Jr.
Chair, Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Letter of Support – Senate Bill 698 – Vehicle Laws – Dangerous Accumulations of Snow and Ice – Removal from Exposed Vehicle Surfaces (Clear Before You Drive Act)

Dear Chair Smith and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) offers the following letter of support for the Committee’s consideration of Senate Bill 698.

SB 698 prohibits a person from operating or towing a vehicle without removing accumulated snow and ice that poses a threat to persons or property from exposed surfaces and prohibits a person from committing a violation that may contribute to a crash resulting in property damage or the injury or death of another person.

The State Highway Administration (SHA) supports the Clear Before You Drive Act as it addresses a critical public safety need on Maryland’s roadways. As we have seen in recent weeks, flying ice shattered the windshield of a sheriff deputy’s cruiser on I-97 in Anne Arundel County, and two people in Harford County were hospitalized when ice smashed through their windshield on I-95.

Additionally, snow debris from moving vehicle surfaces limits visibility for other drivers, contributing to crashes. Uncleared vehicles also significantly contribute to secondary accumulation on roadways, making it more challenging for winter maintenance crews to achieve bare pavement and resulting in dangerous localized icy areas on roadways.

These incidents pose serious threats to highway users and all Marylanders. Currently, driving with snow-covered vehicle surfaces is not explicitly illegal unless it obstructs the driver’s visibility. The Motor Vehicle Administration’s Maryland Driver’s Manual currently contains information on driving in snowy and icy conditions. Drivers are taught to ensure not only their windshield and headlights are clear, but to clear the entire vehicle of snow and ice before they begin vehicle operation on roadways. SB 698 codifies this guidance in law, improves safety for highway users, and holds motorists accountable for snow and ice accumulation on their vehicles.

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SB 698 is a common-sense measure that encourages personal responsibility and prevents avoidable roadway tragedies. For these reasons, the Maryland Department of Transportation respectfully requests the committee consider this information during its deliberations and issue Senate Bill 698 a favorable report.

Respectfully submitted,

April Moeller
Director
Office of Government Affairs
Maryland State Highway Administration
410-210-5780

Matthew Mickler
Director
Office of Government Affairs
Maryland Department of Transportation
410-865-1090