

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2002 Session

FISCAL NOTE
Revised

Senate Bill 353

(Senator Munson)

Judicial Proceedings

Commerce and Government Matters

Vehicle Laws - Drivers' Licenses - Vision Standards

This bill extends the termination date -- from September 30, 2002 to September 30, 2004 -- for the authority of the Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA) to issue a "daylight driving only" noncommercial Class C driver's license to persons who do not meet State vision standards for an unrestricted license or other restricted licenses. It also repeals the September 30, 2002 termination date on the MVA's authority to issue a restricted noncommercial license to a person who does not otherwise meet vision standards but has simultaneously a visual acuity of at least 20/70 in one or both eyes and a continuous field of vision of at least 110 degrees, with at least 35 degrees lateral to the midline of each side.

The bill clarifies the requirements for a restricted Class C noncommercial license to specify that an applicant's visual acuity must be determined by the MVA in consultation with the Medical Advisory Board. It also authorizes optometrists, as well as ophthalmologists, to certify that an individual meets the requirements for an unrestricted license after vision correction surgery.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None. The bill would not substantively change State operations or procedures.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: Chapter 346 of 1997 authorizes the MVA to issue a restricted license to applicants who have, simultaneously, at least 20/40 visual acuity in one or both eyes and continuous field of vision of at least 110 degrees and with peripheral vision of at least 35 degrees lateral to the midline of each side. A license issued to these applicants must be endorsed with “outside mirrors each side” and the MVA may require from the applicant a report of an examination by a licensed ophthalmologist or optometrist for review by the MVA or the Medical Advisory Board. It is subject to other restrictions imposed by the MVA based on recommendations from the applicant’s ophthalmologist or optometrist or any other evaluation that the MVA determines to be appropriate.

A restricted noncommercial license may be issued to applicants who have, simultaneously, at least 20/70 visual acuity in one or both eyes and a continuous field of vision of at least 110 degrees and with peripheral vision of at least 35 degrees lateral to the midline of each side. A license issued to these applicants must be endorsed with “outside mirrors each side” and the MVA may require from the applicant a report of an examination by a licensed ophthalmologist or optometrist for review by the MVA or the Medical Advisory Board. It is subject to other restrictions imposed by the MVA based on recommendations from the applicant’s ophthalmologist or optometrist or any other evaluation that the MVA determines to be appropriate.

A separate, restricted Class C noncommercial license, endorsed “daytime driving only,” can be issued to an applicant who has, simultaneously, a visual acuity of worse than 20/70 but no worse than 20/100 in one or both eyes, and a continuous field of vision of at least 110 degrees with at least 35 degrees lateral to the midline of each side. The license, which authorizes the licensee to drive only during the period beginning one-half hour after sunrise and ending one-half hour before sunset, must be endorsed “outside mirrors each side,” and may be subject to additional restrictions, such as maximum speed limits or types of highways where the licensee can drive. A person issued this license must complete a 20-hour driver’s training course.

For an unrestricted license, each applicant is required to have a minimum visual acuity of 20/40 in each eye, a continuous field of vision of at least 140 degrees, and binocular vision. If the applicant’s vision can be corrected to these standards by glasses or contact lenses, the MVA may issue the applicant a restricted license, endorsed “corrective lenses.”

Background: The changes made by the General Assembly in 1997 to authorize a restricted license reflected the recommendations offered by the Workgroup for Modified Vision Standards, which consisted of medical professionals, MVA staff, and citizens. The workgroup was appointed by the MVA after it concluded that there was a significant

population with vision problems that could drive safely under specified restrictions, but could not do so under the current standards.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Office of Administrative Hearings, Department of Transportation, Department of Legislative Services

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