

Department of Legislative Services  
Maryland General Assembly  
2017 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE  
Third Reader

Senate Bill 668

(Senator Norman, *et al.*)

Judicial Proceedings

Environment and Transportation

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Vehicle Laws - Operation of Motorcycles - Handlebar Height

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This bill increases the maximum height that the handlebars of a motorcycle may be above the motorcycle operator's seat, from 15 inches to 20 inches.

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Fiscal Summary

**State Effect:** Revision of written materials pertaining to motorcycles by the Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA) and enforcement of the bill's provisions can be handled with existing budgeted resources. Revenues are only negligibly affected.

**Local Effect:** Enforcement can be handled with existing budgeted resources. Revenues are not affected.

**Small Business Effect:** Minimal.

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Analysis

**Current Law:** A "motorcycle" is a motor vehicle that (1) has motive power; (2) has a seat or saddle for the rider's use; (3) is designed to travel on not more than three wheels in contact with the ground and at speeds in excess of 35 miles per hour; and (4) is of a type required to comply with all motor vehicle safety standards applicable under federal law.

Maryland Vehicle Law establishes equipment requirements for motorcycles. A person may not operate any motorcycle with handlebars more than 15 inches in height above the part of the seat occupied by the operator. If any motorcycle carries a passenger other than in a sidecar or enclosed cab, the motorcycle must be equipped with footrests for the passenger. Additionally, a person may not operate a motorcycle that has a motor with a

rating of 1.5 brake horsepower or less, or a capacity of less than 70 cubic centimeters piston displacement, on a roadway where the posted maximum speed limit is more than 50 miles per hour or on any expressway or other controlled access highway.

Dealers engaged in the sale of motorcycles, including their agents and employees, are required to inform a buyer of the operating restrictions on engine size. MVA is also authorized to provide a warning.

A violation of these provisions is a misdemeanor and a violator is subject to a maximum fine of \$500. For violations of the handlebar and footrest requirements, the prepayment penalty set by the District Court is \$80. For a violation of the engine size requirement, MVA must assess one point on the driver's license and, if the violation contributes to an accident, the prepayment penalty is \$120 and MVA must assess three points against the license.

**Background:** The Judiciary advises that there were three violations of the maximum motorcycle handlebar height requirement in fiscal 2016.

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### **Additional Information**

**Prior Introductions:** None.

**Cross File:** None.

**Information Source(s):** Judiciary (Administrative Office of the Courts); Department of State Police; Maryland Department of Transportation; Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - February 21, 2017  
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