

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2024 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Enrolled - Revised

Senate Bill 277

(Chair, Judicial Proceedings Committee)(By Request -
Departmental - Transportation)

Judicial Proceedings

**Vehicle Laws - Driver's Licenses, Learner's Instructional Permits, and
Identification Cards**

This departmental bill exempts certain applicants for identification cards who present appropriate documentation to the Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA) from paying the required fee. The bill also extends the term of a learner's instructional permit from 180 days to one year. Finally, the bill establishes that a driver's license issued to certain U.S. government contractors (and any dependents) must remain in full force and effect during an absence from the State if specified criteria are met.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The bill is not anticipated to materially affect Transportation Trust Fund finances or operations. Reprogramming changes can be handled with existing resources.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: The Maryland Department of Transportation has determined that this bill has minimal or no impact on small business (attached). The Department of Legislative Services concurs with this assessment. (The attached assessment does not reflect amendments to the bill.)

Analysis

Bill Summary/Current Law:

Identification Cards

Under current law, on application, MVA must issue an identification card to any applicant who is a Maryland resident, does not have a driver's license, presents a birth certificate or other acceptable proof of age and identity, and provides satisfactory documentary evidence that the applicant has a valid Social Security number or is not eligible for a Social Security number. MVA may issue an identification card to an applicant without lawful status under specified circumstances if the applicant would otherwise be eligible for that document.

MVA must establish a fee for the issuance of identification cards (and duplicates). However, a fee is not currently required if the applicant:

- is age 65 or older;
- is legally blind;
- has permanently lost the use of a leg or an arm;
- is permanently disabled so severely that the applicant cannot move without the aid of crutches or a wheelchair; or
- has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a "major life activity" as defined in the federal Americans with Disabilities Act.

In addition, MVA must issue an identification card at no cost to an individual who applies for an identification card and presents (1) an identification card issued by the Division of Correction (DOC) that displays specified information and a photograph of the individual and (2) the individual's Social Security card.

The bill expands the fee exemption to any applicant who presents documentation showing that the applicant (1) was released from any correctional facility (not just a DOC facility) within the prior 60 days; (2) is a youth under the care of the Department of Juvenile Services; (3) is a youth between 15 and 20 years of age, inclusive, who is a participant in a Department of Human Services program, as approved by MVA; (4) is currently homeless; (5) is currently under the care of the Maryland Department of Health; or (6) is participating in another program administered by a State agency that requires the applicant to possess an identification card.

Learner's Instructional Permits

Under current law, a learner's instructional permit held by an individual who currently holds a driver's license to operate one class of motor vehicle and desires a driver's license for another class of vehicle expires 180 days after the date of issuance of the permit. The bill extends this period to one year.

License Validity During Periods Abroad

Under current law, a license held by a member of the armed forces of the United States who is absent from the State on active service in the armed forces of the United States (or a dependent of the member who is residing with the member outside of the State) must remain in full force and effect during such absence.

The bill applies the same requirement to a contract employee working on behalf of a federal agency or branch of the armed services who is absent from the State in service of the contract (or a dependent of the contract employee who is residing with the employee outside the State).

Background:

Identification Cards

MVA notes that the bill expands current identification card fee exemptions to many categories of individuals who are currently subject to a \$1 fee (pursuant to State regulations). However, MVA advises that the cost of collecting and accounting for the \$1 fee exceeds the revenue generated. Under the bill, MVA can provide needed identification credentials to applicants while also realizing administrative efficiencies.

Learner's Instructional Permits

MVA notes that, pursuant to Chapter 442 of 2023, the term of a commercial driver's instructional permit was extended from 180 days to one year (in part, to allow applicants additional training time). The bill extends the same one-year term to other types of learner's permits, allowing applicants more time to practice and acclimate themselves to Maryland highways and roads.

License Validity During Periods Abroad

MVA advises that some applicants' licenses expire while they are working on years-long government contracts overseas (including for the armed services). While such applicants may have documentation indicating they are civilians and have been out of the country for

purposes related to government contracting work, there is no provision in State law allowing such individuals to maintain a valid license if they are absent at the required time of renewal. MVA receives several requests each month from individuals in these types of situations; the bill's changes provide a remedy to those who find themselves abroad in such circumstances.

Additional Information

Recent Prior Introductions: Similar legislation has not been introduced within the last three years.

Designated Cross File: HB 161 (Chair, Environment and Transportation Committee)(By Request - Departmental - Transportation) - Environment and Transportation.

Information Source(s): Department of Housing and Community Development; Department of Human Services; Department of Juvenile Services; Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services; Maryland Department of Transportation; Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - January 30, 2024
rh/ljm Third Reader - March 19, 2024
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ANALYSIS OF ECONOMIC IMPACT ON SMALL BUSINESSES

TITLE OF BILL: **Vehicle Laws – Driver’s Licenses, Learner’s Instructional Permits, and Identification Cards**

BILL NUMBER: SB 277

PREPARED BY: Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration

PART A. ECONOMIC IMPACT RATING

This agency estimates that the proposed bill:

 X WILL HAVE MINIMAL OR NO ECONOMIC IMPACT ON MARYLAND SMALL BUSINESS

OR

 WILL HAVE MEANINGFUL ECONOMIC IMPACT ON MARYLAND SMALL BUSINESSES

PART B. ECONOMIC IMPACT ANALYSIS

N/A.