

**Department of Legislative Services**  
Maryland General Assembly  
2026 Session

**FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE**  
**First Reader**

House Bill 1353 (Delegate Fair, *et al.*)

Environment and Transportation and  
Health

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**Homeless Individuals - Fee and Examination Exemptions**

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This bill prohibits the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) from collecting a fee for certain copies of vital records issued to homeless individuals and establishes exemptions for homeless individuals from certain motor vehicle- and driving-related fees, including fees associated with motor vehicle registration and the Vehicle Emissions Inspection Program (VEIP). The bill also reduces the period of time, from nine months to three months, during which unaccompanied homeless youth younger than age 19 who hold a learner's instructional permit must wait before taking a driver skills examination or driver road examination for a provisional license. The bill generally requires as proof of homelessness a signed written statement from a homeless services provider located in the State that (1) affirms that the individual is homeless and (2) includes an address to which the relevant correspondence may be sent.

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**Fiscal Summary**

**State Effect:** Transportation Trust Fund (TTF) and special fund revenues decrease, potentially by tens of thousands of dollars annually, beginning in FY 2027, as discussed below. General fund revenues for MDH are not anticipated to be materially affected as discussed below. State expenditures are not anticipated to be materially affected.

**Local Effect:** The bill is not anticipated to materially affect local finances or operations, as discussed below.

**Small Business Effect:** None.

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## Analysis

### Bill Summary/Current Law:

#### *Vital Records*

Under current law, MDH collects a \$10 or \$12 fee to access copies of vital records, including birth and death certificates and marriage and divorce records, among other documents. However, MDH is prohibited from collecting a fee for issuing a certified or abridged copy of a birth certificate to a homeless individual, as defined in the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. A homeless individual may receive one copy of a birth certificate without a fee in a single transaction.

The bill extends these fee exemptions to all vital records, instead of only birth certificates. “Vital record” means a certificate or report of birth, death, fetal death, marriage, divorce, dissolution or annulment of marriage, adoption, or adjudication of paternity that is required by law to be filed with the Secretary of Health.

#### *Provisional Licensing Changes*

The bill reduces the period of time, from nine months to three months, during which unaccompanied homeless youth younger than age 19 who hold a learner’s instructional permit must wait before taking a driver skills examination or driver road examination for a provisional license.

The bill defines “unaccompanied homeless youth” as a child or youth who (1) is not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian; (2) is a homeless child or youth, as defined by the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act; and (3) was determined to be a homeless child or youth by specified individuals (e.g., a Maryland local school system homeless liaison).

Under current law, the holder of a learner’s instructional permit *younger than age 19* is generally prohibited from taking a driver skills or road examination for a provisional license within nine months from the date of issuance of the learner’s permit or from the most recent date of conviction, or the granting of probation before judgment, for a moving violation. The learner’s permit holder must also successfully complete an approved driver education program consisting of at least 30 hours of classroom instruction and at least 6 hours of highway driving instruction, as well as at least 60 hours of driving practice (including 10 hours of nighttime driving) supervised by a licensed driver who is 21 or older and has been licensed for three or more years. A learner’s permit holder also has to submit a completed skills log book with the signatures of supervising drivers (and the signature of a parent, guardian, or other person, if applicable).

Also under current law, the holder of a learner's instructional permit who is *at least 18 years old and has a high school diploma* (or its equivalent), or who is *at least 19 years old but younger than 25*, is prohibited from taking a driver skills or road examination for a provisional license within three months from the date of issuance of the learner's permit or within nine months from the most recent date of conviction, or the granting of probation before judgment, for a moving violation. The learner's permit holder must also successfully complete an approved driver education program consisting of at least 30 hours of classroom instruction and at least 6 hours of highway driving instruction, as well as at least 60 hours of driving practice (including 10 hours of nighttime driving) supervised by a licensed driver who is 21 or older and has been licensed for three or more years. The individual must also submit a completed skills log book with the signatures of supervising drivers. The bill expands this provision to also apply to unaccompanied homeless youth who are younger than 19; as a result (and assuming all other requirements are met), the waiting period is reduced from nine to three months for these individuals.

#### *License Fee Exemption*

The bill prohibits the Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA) from imposing a fee under § 16-112.2 of the Transportation Article, which generally requires an applicant to pay a fee for a license or a learner's permit, if a licensee or applicant is a homeless individual. However, a homeless individual is responsible for a fee for issuance of a duplicate license. MVA must adopt regulations to implement these requirements.

#### *Vehicle Registration Fee Exemption*

Certain vehicles are exempt from registration fees under current law (*e.g.*, vehicles owned and operated by the United States, the State of Maryland, or any political subdivision of the State). Under the bill, a vehicle owned and personally used by a homeless individual is also exempt. MVA must adopt regulations to implement this requirement.

#### *Vehicle Emissions Inspection Program Testing Exemption*

Title 23, Subtitle 2 of the Transportation Article generally requires all model year 1977 and newer vehicles in the State to be inspected and tested every two years, unless specifically exempt. MVA and the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) must set the VEIP fee for each vehicle to be inspected and tested, which may not exceed \$30 through June 30, 2026. The current fee is \$30 but must be adjusted in future fiscal years to account for changes in the Consumer Price Index, as required by the Budget Reconciliation and Financing Act of 2025.

A vehicle owner must be granted a waiver from the VEIP inspection requirement if the vehicle fails to pass the exhaust emissions test but the owner provides specified evidence of payment for emissions-related repairs.

Persons with special disability registration plates, persons age 70 or older, and deployed military personnel are eligible for an exemption from the inspection requirement under specified circumstances (MVA/MDE regulations refer to these exemptions as “waivers”).

Any fire or rescue apparatus or ambulance owned or leased by a political subdivision of the State, or by a volunteer fire company, rescue squad, or volunteer ambulance company, registered as an emergency vehicle is exempt from VEIP inspections.

The bill expands these exemptions by establishing that a motor vehicle owned by a homeless individual at the time of a scheduled mandatory inspection is exempt from the mandatory inspections required if the exemption is not otherwise prohibited by federal law.

### **State Fiscal Effect:**

#### *Vital Records Fees*

Revenues collected by MDH for vital records accrue to the general fund. Accordingly, by prohibiting MDH from collecting fees for copies of vital records for homeless individuals, the bill decreases general fund revenues collected by MDH; however, MDH advises, and the Department of Legislative Services concurs, that any such impact is likely negligible.

#### *Motor Vehicle Related Fees*

Although the exact number of individuals who may qualify for the fee exemptions established by the bill is unknown, the bill is anticipated to decrease vehicle registration fee and related revenues, potentially by tens of thousands of dollars annually beginning in fiscal 2027. *For illustrative purposes only*, if approximately 600 vehicles qualify for the registration fee and VEIP inspections exemptions, TTF revenues would decrease by approximately \$55,000 in fiscal 2027 (taking into account the bill’s October 1, 2026 effective date) and by approximately \$85,000 in fiscal 2031.

Additionally, the vehicle registration fee exemption also affects other special fund revenues due to the \$40 surcharge collected on vehicle registrations, specifically for the Maryland Emergency Medical System Operations Fund, Maryland Trauma Physician Services Fund, and R Adams Cowley Shock Trauma Center. Under the above illustrative example, revenues for these special funds decrease by approximately \$18,000 in fiscal 2027 and by \$29,500 in fiscal 2031.

The bill's effect on other fee revenues (*e.g.*, driver's licenses) is anticipated to be minimal.

In addition, as a portion of registration fee revenues is shared with local governments through capital transportation grants, TTF expenditures for that purpose decrease minimally.

**Local Revenues:** A portion of the revenues from motor vehicle registration fees accrues to the Gasoline and Motor Vehicle Revenue Account and is provided to local governments through capital transportation grants. Accordingly, local government revenues decrease minimally due to the registration fee exemptions established by the bill; however, the bill's impact on any one individual local jurisdiction is negligible.

Local health department revenues may be affected by the bill's change to vital record fees, although, similar to the impact discussed above for MDH, any such impact is anticipated to be negligible.

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### **Additional Information**

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

**Designated Cross File:** None.

**Information Source(s):** Maryland Association of County Health Officers; Maryland Department of Health; Department of Housing and Community Development; Department of Human Services; Maryland Department of Transportation; Department of Legislative Services

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