

Department of Legislative Services  
Maryland General Assembly  
2026 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE  
First Reader

House Bill 777 (Delegate Spiegel, *et al.*)  
Environment and Transportation

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Motor Vehicles - Required Equipment - Rear Occupant Alert Systems (Hot Cars Act)

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This bill prohibits a person from selling or offering for sale a motor vehicle meeting specified criteria unless the vehicle is equipped with a “rear occupant alert system” that meets requirements set by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). The Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA) is prohibited from registering a motor vehicle sold in violation of the bill. MVA must adopt regulations necessary to carry out the provisions of the bill, including procedures for documenting compliance at the time of sale or registration. MVA may not enforce the bill if a federal agency determines in writing that such enforcement would cause the State to become ineligible to receive any federal funds. **The bill takes effect October 1, 2029.**

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Fiscal Summary

**State Effect:** MVA can implement the bill’s requirements with existing resources, as discussed below. Revenues are not affected.

**Local Effect:** The bill does not materially affect local finances or operations.

**Small Business Effect:** None, as discussed below.

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Analysis

**Bill Summary:** A “rear occupant alert system” is a system that alerts the operator to inspect the rear-designated seating positions of the vehicle after the engine or motor is deactivated.

The bill applies to a motor vehicle with rear-designated seating positions that is:

- manufactured or assembled *at least one year after* NHTSA promulgates final regulations establishing standards for rear occupant alert systems; and
- registered or of a type capable of being registered in the State as a Class A (passenger), Class E (truck), or class M (multipurpose) vehicle.

**Current Law:** A person may not drive, and an owner may not cause or knowingly permit to be driven on any highway, any vehicle or combination of vehicles that is in such unsafe condition as to endanger any person or that does not contain or is not equipped at all times with lamps and other equipment in proper condition and adjustment as required by law. There is currently no State requirement for motor vehicles to be equipped with rear occupant alert systems.

**State Expenditures:** MVA advises that it currently lacks rear occupant alert systems data – such information is not available through VINtelligence (vehicle identification number decoding software) or the National Motor Vehicle Title Information System. However, once NHTSA establishes the federal requirements, MVA can use existing resources to update systems to check for that vehicle data before allowing a vehicle to be titled and registered in the State.

**Small Business Effect:** According to MVA, vehicles that fail to meet NHTSA standards, including rear occupant alert system capabilities (when those are established), are ineligible for sale in the United States following the final rule taking effect.

**Additional Comments:** In response to growing concern over child heatstroke deaths in vehicles, the federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act required NHTSA to issue a rule requiring all new passenger vehicles to be equipped with a rear occupant alert system. NHTSA missed the 2023 deadline and has yet to issue a rule.

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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 Department of Health; Maryland Department of Transportation; Kelley Blue Book; ABC News; Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - February 19, 2026  
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