

BILL NUMBER HB0038

BILL TITLE: Vehicle Laws - Failure to Pay Video Toll - Reform of Penalties

BILL CONTACT: Delegate Al Carr

POSITION: Support

February 6, 2020

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB0038

MEAGAN FRAME DISTRICT 308

To The Honorable Kumar Barve, Chair, The Honorable Dana Stein, Vice Chair, and the Environment and Transportation Committee members,

My name is Meagan Frame and I have an EZ Pass horror story. I used to drive for UberX and still drive for UberEats and had used an EZ Pass transponder for less than a year before switching back to cash.

My problems started when I had signed up for the commuter subscription. I was informed of discount tolling for people using the tunnels and bridges regularly, and it made sense to sign up given that I had driven through the Harbor Tunnel 6 times in one day and had paid cash to do so. However, Uber's assignments aren't predictable, and I ended up not using it much at all.

I was surprised to receive a bill for what seemed to be tolls I hadn't used. Or maybe I owe the balance of the cash price? I still don't understand it and have not yet paid it: \$110 is about what I make per day, so I've been putting it off until I have the extra funds to pay it.

But my woes don't stop there.

I spend the extra time driving so I can avoid tolls as much as possible. On the rare occasion that I use the ICC, I try to pay the toll as soon as it shows up in the mail. For one of my tolls, I received a surprise second notice (but not the first) with a \$50 late fee included. FOR A \$4 TOLL. I have not yet paid this, as it's half my day's pay.

Before this happened, I didn't realize EZ Pass system would wreak so much havoc on my ability to keep up all the paperwork involved in maintaining my car. If I had known, I would have never signed up in order to keep this from happening.

But now, I have a flag notice from the MVA. Another \$30 penalty because I don't have the funds to pay the \$50 fine on a \$4 toll. I feel like my government is making excuses to bleed my wallet.

The late payment fine of \$50 is egregious and predatory. If it had been more reasonable, it would have been easier for me pay it off and not caused other problems.

House Bill 38 is very important to fixing some of the problems associated with EZ Pass. Lowering the fine rate to be more reasonable will result in more people paying what they owe, and less people feeling like they were taken advantage of by the state to generate revenue.

In addition to the solutions it offers, I also believe the Maryland Transportation Authority should do everything it can to make sure drivers understand what is expected of them to stay in compliance and make access to doing those things more easily available. One idea is to end the 50% video-toll surcharge, which is basically a travel tax, immediately.

Sincerely,
Meagan Frame
281 5th St
Lothian, MD 20711