



# THE PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT

OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

**BILL:** House Bill 200 - Vehicle Laws - Registration Plate  
Frames and Borders - Enforcement

**SPONSOR:** Delegates W. Fisher, *et al.*

**HEARING DATE:** February 13, 2020

**COMMITTEE:** Environment and Transportation

**CONTACT:** Intergovernmental Affairs Office, 301-780-8411

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**POSITION:** OPPOSE

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The Office of the Prince George's County Executive **OPPOSES House Bill 200 Vehicle Laws - Registration Plate Frames and Borders - Enforcement** which would prohibit law enforcement officers from using violations involving registration plate frames and covers as a primary reason to make a traffic stop.

Existing Maryland traffic law (13-411) makes it very clear that drivers are required to maintain their registration plates to be free from foreign materials, including plate covers, and that the entire registration plate must be clearly legible. In many cases, plate frames and plate covers either purposely or inadvertently cover some portion of the plate, which can result in one or more characters on the plate to be obscured, or more commonly, obscuring the validation tabs showing the expiration month/year. Subsection (i) specifically notes that "It is the duty of every police officer to report to the Administration all vehicles operated in violation of this section."

The Prince George's County Police Department is not aware of any trending or confirmed grouping of traffic stops based solely on plate frame violations. As Maryland traffic law stands now, an officer would only have cause stop a vehicle *if* some portion of a plate frame was obscuring a character on the plate or one of the validation tabs. The purpose of such stops is to ensure the vehicle's registration is current and has not lapsed, and to educate citizens that their plates must be clearly visible at all times.

Additionally, in many cases it can be difficult to tell from even short distances if plate frames also incorporate a plate cover. All plate covers, even those which appear to be clear, are illegal in Maryland. Some plate covers, even those which appear to be clear, also incorporate technology which is used to defeat red light and speed cameras from being able to take clear photos of the underlying registration plate(s).

For the reasons stated above, the Office of the Prince George's County Executive **OPPOSES House Bill 200** and asks for an **UNFAVORABLE** report.