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CHARLES E. SYDNOR III, ESQ.
Legislative District 44
Baltimore City and Baltimore County

Judicial Proceedings Committee

Parliamentarian
Maryland Legislative Black Caucus



James Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street, Room 216
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3612 • 301-858-3612
800-492-7122 Ext. 3612
Charles.Sydnor@senate.state.md.us

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Senator Charles E. Sydnor III
Testimony Regarding SB 859 – Vehicle Laws –
Registration Plate Frames and Borders – Enforcement
Before the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
On February 27, 2020

Good afternoon Mr. Chairman, members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee.

Senate Bill 859 subjects only to secondary enforcement a violation involving the placement of an object framing or bordering the edges of a registration plate. Under secondary enforcement, a police officer may not issue a citation to a driver for violating this Vehicle Law provision unless the police office has first detained the driver for another suspected violation of State law.

Section 13-411.1 of the Maryland Vehicle Code states that no one may buy, sell, or advertise any registration plate cover.¹ This statute defines "registration plate cover" as "any tinted, colored, painted, marked, clear, or illuminated object that is designed to cover any of the characters of a vehicle's registration plate or distort a recorded image of any of the characters of a vehicle's registration plate recorded by a traffic control signal monitoring system."² Maryland State Police officer has advised that obscuring any part of one's license plate with a frame is reason enough for him/her to stop you.³ This statement indicates that the decision to detain is discretionary.⁴

At present, violations of the Maryland Vehicle Law are subject to primary enforcement. SB0859 will provide much needed enforcement guidance. In fiscal 2019, the District Court advises there were 3,214 violations issued for failure to maintain a legible registration plate free from foreign materials or covers. It is not known how many of those citations were issued due to an object framing or bordering the edges of a registration plate. SB0859 seeks to clarify the Vehicle Law.

I urge the committee to vote in favor of SB 859.

¹ <https://law.justia.com/codes/maryland/2010/transportation/title-13/subtitle-4/13-411-1/>.

² *Id.*

³ <https://baltimore.cbslocal.com/2017/08/11/your-license-plate-frame-could-get-you-pulled-over/>.

⁴ *Id.*