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February 4, 2021

To: The Honorable Kumar P. Barve
Chair, Environment and Transportation Committee

From: Karen S. Straughn
Consumer Protection Division

Re: House Bill 483 – Towing or Removal of Vehicles – Reclamation Hours (CONCERN)

The Consumer Protection Division of the Office of the Attorney General has concerns regarding House Bill 483 introduced by Delegate Veronica Turner. This bill amends the time period during which towed vehicles may be reclaimed by the public. Although the Division appreciates the sponsor's concern about the safety of employees who work at impound lots, we believe that the bill could harm consumers without accomplishing the sponsor's goals.

An individual whose vehicle has been towed is likely to need that vehicle as soon as possible to be able to continue their daily activities, including going to work or school. The Division appreciates that the sponsor has expanded the hours that a driver may claim their vehicle over last year's bill. However, it may still be difficult for an individual to retrieve their vehicle during the hours listed in the bill if they work long hours or work and go to school simultaneously. During a time when the pandemic has affected the schedules of so many individuals, reducing available hours may increase the likelihood that an individual will have to miss school or work to reclaim their vehicle, which may cause a hardship.

Section 21-10A-01(b)(2) of the Transportation Article authorizes local jurisdictions to enact towing regulations that are more stringent than those set forth in State law. Many of the major jurisdictions have local towing laws which would render these provisions inapplicable and, therefore, nullify the sponsor's intentions in those jurisdictions.

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Accordingly, the Consumer Protection Division wanted to make the Environment and Transportation Committee aware of our concerns.

cc: The Honorable Veronica Turner
Members, Environment and Transportation Committee