



Auto Consumer Alliance

13900 Laurel Lakes Avenue, Suite 100
Laurel, MD 20707

**Testimony to the House Environment and Transportation Committee
HB 291 – Vehicle Laws – Failure to Pay Video Toll – Outstanding Penalties –
Position: Favorable**

Jan. 21, 2021

The Honorable Kumar Barve
Environment and Transportation Committee
Room 251, House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401
cc: Members, Environment and Transportation Committee

Honorable Chair Barve and Members of the Committee:

I'm a consumer advocate and Executive Director of Consumer Auto, a group that brings together consumer-friendly auto dealers and consumer advocates to work for safety, transparency, and fair treatment for Maryland drivers and car buyers.

Consumer Auto supports **HB 291** because it would provide needed relief to many Marylanders – including many lower-income Marylanders – who incurred substantial debts as a result the \$50 toll violation fines Maryland was assessing until the state acted to cut those fines in half last year.

Lower-income Marylanders are more likely than other residents to lack an EZ pass transponder, or to need to replenish their EZ pass accounts regularly because they don't have a credit card that can pay those fees automatically, or to struggle to pay the bill for toll fees sent through the mail. As a result, those toll violations fines have fallen disproportionately on those least able to pay the toll-by-mail fees and the fines for not paying those fees

The \$50 toll violation fees thus became a debt trap for many lower-income Marylanders. Continuing to seek to collect the full fees – and additional collection costs – on the more than \$2.2. million in outstanding debts for those fines from 2016 through 2020 would impose further serious financial strains on thousands of struggling Marylanders.

Cutting the outstanding fees to \$25 would ease that burden, at least to some extent. It would also bring the outstanding fines more fairly in line with the fairer \$25 fines the state is now charging for such violations.

I urge you to give a **FAVORABLE** report to **HB 291**.

Sincerely,

Franz Schneiderman
Consumer Auto