

SB 429 LTH.pdf

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Position: FAV

SENATOR DELORES G. KELLEY
Legislative District 10
Baltimore County

Chair
Finance Committee

Executive Nominations Committee
Rules Committee
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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**TESTIMONY OF SENATOR DELORES G. KELLEY
REGARDING SENATE BILL 429-FOR-HIRE DRIVING AND VEHICLES-
REQUIREMENTS
BEFORE THE SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE
February 9, 2021**

Mr. Vice-Chair and Members:

The Public Service Commission is tasked not only with regulation of electric and gas utility rates, but also has oversight on persons engaged in the public transportation of individual for-hire in vehicles such as cars, vans, limousines and buses.

Senate Bill 429 makes administrative changes to the for-hire driver's and vehicle application process. It eliminates a requirement for Baltimore City taxicab drivers to take an education course, changes the way information is displayed on taxicabs, and removes taxicabs from the exemption of motor vehicles not required

to have seat belts in their vehicle. These provisions support for-hire drivers, for-hire license companies, and ultimately, boost safety for the public as well.

Currently, for-hire drivers must file their application providing two recent photographs in a size that can be attached to the license. The Maryland Public Service Commission worked with the Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration so that a Maryland driver does not have to submit or be photographed by the Commission, but can give permission to use their license photo from the MVA. This means the applicant does not have to take time to travel to the Commission offices, which is important, especially during this time of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Commission rules dictate that an individual seeking a Baltimore City taxicab license or renewal of a Baltimore City taxicab license must submit proof of successfully completing an approved Commission course that includes in the curriculum courteous treatment of passengers, geography and map reading for the jurisdiction in which the taxicab service is provided, and tourist information for the jurisdiction the taxicab service provides. Senate Bill 429 eliminates the required course for Baltimore City taxicab drivers. The course is no longer needed and is

outdated due to development of electronic assistance in taxicabs, such as GPS and other navigation systems. The course requirement is only for Baltimore City taxicab drivers. However, with the vast changes in the transportation industry (Uber/Lyft), the current requirement is not fair and creates an added expense not equally required for other transportation services. Under the current rules, this could potentially delay the licensing of drivers since the course may not be offered due to the pandemic.

Senate Bill 429 also reduces the lettering requirement of the taxicab permit holder's information on the vehicle, potentially saving the permit holder money. Senate Bill 429 also expands requirements for the operation of limousines, etc. to include many drivers that operate motor vehicles for-hire in Maryland.

Finally, Senate Bill 429 removes taxicabs from a limited list of motor vehicles not required to have seat belts in their vehicle. The current language is outdated. This important measure will mean the riding public will be able to use seat belts, as intended by the vehicle manufacturer and Maryland laws.

I therefore ask for your support in passing SB 429.

SB0429_Favorable_Staneck.pdf

Uploaded by: Staneck, Jason

Position: FAV

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PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

February 9, 2021

Chair Delores G. Kelley
Senate Finance Committee
3 East, Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: SB 429- FAVORABLE - For-Hire Driving and Vehicles - Requirements

Dear Chair Kelley and Committee Members:

The Maryland Public Service Commission reviewed the State's for-hire driving statutes and identified several provisions that no longer reflect modern-day realities. Consequently, the Commission urges a favorable vote on Senate Bill 429, to make various technical fixes to the *Public Utilities Article* and *Transportation Article*. These improvements will benefit for-hire drivers, for-hire companies, and the public.

The current law, *PUA 10-104(a)(1)(iv)* requires the applicant for a for-hire drivers license to file with their application two recent photographs, of a size that may be easily attached to the license. As a result of collaboration with the Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration, a Maryland driver no longer is required to submit or be photographed by the Commission if the applicant provides consent to obtain the applicant's driver license photo from the MVA. Implementation of the current procedures has eliminated the need for the applicant to commute to Commission offices, which is important for public health and public safety during the COVID-19 pandemic.

PUA 10-104(d)(2) currently requires an individual applying for a Baltimore City taxicab license or renewal of a Baltimore City taxicab license to submit proof of having successfully completed a course approved by the Commission that includes in the curriculum: courteous treatment of passengers, geography and map reading for the jurisdiction in which the taxicab services will be provided; and tourist information for the jurisdiction in which taxicab services will be provided. SB 429 eliminates the required course for Baltimore City taxicab drivers. The requirement is outdated because due to the evolution of electronic assistance in taxicabs (i.e., GPS tablets or laptops and mapping etc.), the course is no longer necessary. The course requirement is only for Baltimore City taxicab drivers and with the transformation in the industry with sedan and Transportation Network Services (Uber/Lyft), the requirement is unjust and creates an expense for the applicant that is not equally required for other transportation services. Course scheduling creates a delay in the licensing of drivers and in some circumstances, such as the pandemic, the course may not be available.

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Currently, *PUA 10-206(a)(1)* requires the name of the taxicab permit holder of the taxicab to be permanently painted or affixed on one door on each side of a taxicab, in letters at least 2.5 inches high. SB 429 would allow for the elimination of the requirement of the permit holder's name to be affixed on each side of a taxicab regulated by the Commission. The requirement for the additional lettering is outdated and can confuse the general public with identifying the vehicle. The association name and permit number are more than adequate for identifying the taxicab. Elimination of the requirement would be a cost savings for the permit holder.

TA 21-1127 currently specifies requirements for the operation of a limousine of a certain size, operators licensing requirements and display of required registration plates. The current language fails to include many drivers that operate motor vehicles for-hire in this State. Updating the language would broaden law enforcement capabilities for this section.

Lastly *TA 22-412(d)* specifies requirements for seat belts for every vehicle registered in this State. Also included in this section is an exclusion for taxicabs -- for this section only, they are not defined as a "motor vehicle." SB 429 will align seat belt requirements for taxicabs with all other vehicles required to have seat belts in this State. The current language is outdated and does not correlate with the current style of vehicles utilized as taxicabs. The bill would ensure the riding public has access to seat belts, as designed by the vehicle manufacturer, which meet State safety standards.

Passage of SB 429 will provide important safety and cost-saving updates to current law that will provide benefits to for-hire drivers, for-hire companies, and the public. The Public Service Commission urges a favorable vote for this bill. Thank you for your consideration of this information. Please contact Lisa Smith, Director of Legislative Affairs, at 410-336-6288 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Jason M. Stanek
Chairman



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February 4, 2021

To: Public Service Commission
Attn: Mr Koermer

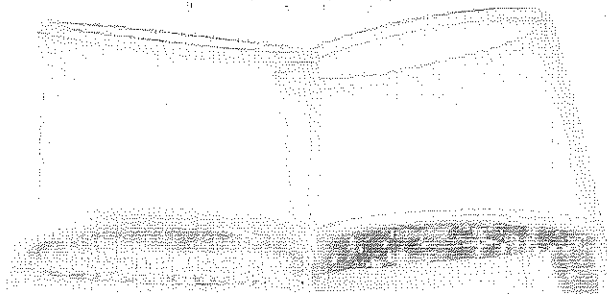
Reference: SB 529,

The Maryland Limousine Association would like to support the bill stated above, our board agrees that this will help make the public service commission better at getting drivers licensed faster, and making sure companies don't lose good employees as they can't afford to wait a long period to start working. We are all for anything that helps us get good employees working quickly and safely. If you have any questions or would like any other information, please contact me at 410-522-3300.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gary Day', is written over the 'Regards,' text.

Gary Day
President
MLA





January 25, 2021

Cristopher Koermer
Director of Transportation
Maryland Public Service Commission
6 St. Paul St. 16th Floor
Baltimore, Maryland

Dear Mr. Koermer,

I am writing in support of HB 558, For-Hire Driving and Vehicles – Requirements. WHC Worldwide (branded as zTrip) is the largest taxi company in the United States, currently operating in 21 cities - including 330 taxis in Baltimore. We always encourage and support the modernization of the taxicab codes. The proposed language changes in HB 558 will:

- 1.) Reduce processing time to badge driver prospects, bringing the length of time more in line with other forms of passenger transportation
- 2.) Lower expense for current permit holders, primarily the owner-drivers
- 3.) Improve the safety of the passengers through the requirement and use of accessible safety belts
- 4.) Reduce confusion for the riding public with the elimination of some decal requirements.

Thank you for your consideration and, hopefully, the eventual passing of this important legislation and please feel free to contact me with any questions.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Kines', is written over the typed name.

Dwight R. Kines
Regional Vice President
410-977-0526
dkines@ztrip.com

SB0429 - MVA - For Hire Driving - LOI_FINAL.pdf

Uploaded by: Westervelt, Patricia

Position: INFO

February 9, 2021

The Honorable Delores G. Kelley
Chairwoman, Senate Finance Committee
3 East, Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: Letter of Information – Senate Bill 429 – For-Hire Driving and Vehicles - Requirements

Dear Chairwoman Kelley and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) takes no position on Senate Bill 429 but offers the following information for the Committee's consideration.

Senate Bill 429 requires the MDOT Motor Vehicle Administration (MDOT MVA) to share access to driver license photos of for-hire driver applicants with the Maryland Public Service Commission.

After discussions with the Public Service Commission, in 2019, the MDOT MVA began electronically transmitting photos of for-hire driving applicants directly to the Public Service Commission. MDOT MVA is committed to continuing to provide this service which saves the applicant from having to make a special trip just to get a photo taken.

The Maryland Department of Transportation respectfully requests the Committee consider this information when deliberating Senate Bill 429.

Respectfully submitted,

Christine E. Nizer
Administrator
Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration
410-787-7830

Pilar Helm
Director of Government Affairs
Maryland Department of Transportation
410-865-1090