
February 11, 2021

The Honorable Shane E. Pendergrass
Chair, House Health and Government Operations Committee
241 House Office Building
Annapolis MD 21401

Re: Letter of Information – House Bill 272 – Public Information Act - Required Denials - Sociological Information and Distribution Lists

Dear Chair Pendergrass and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) takes no position on House Bill 272 but offers the following information for the Committee's consideration.

House Bill 272 amends the Personal Information Act (PIA) to allow members of the General Assembly to obtain the names and addresses of individuals on a distribution list in connection with legislative action. Current law mandates that all custodians deny distribution lists to protect the public and their personal information.

MDOT is dedicated to protecting the privacy of Maryland citizens and the personal data we possess in order to conduct business with the public. Providing a personal address to anyone, including legislators, could disclose private sociological information. Such a release could, for example, result in unwanted targeting for commercial or business gain, reveal that an individual's personal address is a residential mental health or rehabilitation facility, or result in the unwanted exposure of a person in a domestic abuse situation. Due to these reasons and others, MDOT is not legally permitted to release personally identifiable information (PII), including personal contact information such as home addresses.

Allowing distribution lists to leave a custodian's possession would once again raise concerns over personal information privacy and protection that could lead to cyber, financial, or other types of harm to those individuals whose information is released. House Bill 272 could also lead to the release of other personal information, in addition to email addresses. Additionally, there is no means to allow the public to opt out of their information being shared; the automatic denial in current law removes any ambiguity and ensures that personal information is protected.

The Maryland Department of Transportation respectfully requests the Committee consider this information as it deliberates House Bill 272.

Respectfully submitted,

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Maryland Department of Transportation
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