

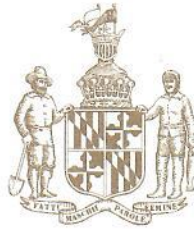
SB435 King Sponsor Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Horton, Patty

Position: FAV

NANCY J. KING
Legislative District 39
Montgomery County

MAJORITY LEADER



James Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street, Room 121
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
301-858-3686 · 410-841-3686
800-492-7122 Ext. 3686
Fax 301-858-3670 · 410-841-3670
Nancy.King@senate.state.md.us

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

SPONSOR STATEMENT

Senate Bill 435 – Vehicle Laws – Failure to Pay Video Toll – Penalties

February 10, 2021

Mister Chairman and Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee:

Maryland ranks right up with New York, New Jersey and California as one of the most heavily commuting states in the nation. Our residents use our roads to get to their jobs and often must travel through our toll systems.

Under current law, the Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration can suspend a vehicle registration for failure to pay video toll debt. Passage of Senate Bill 435 would remove suspensions and flag the registration for non-renewal.

Many Maryland families are struggling financially and the pandemic has increased those numbers. Suspending a registration of a resident who is struggling to pay their debt forces them to make a choice of driving illegally or not getting to their jobs. It further limits their access to food, healthcare and other resources.

Removing suspension for toll violations aligns Maryland with the majority of states who are simply flagging the registration for non-renewal.

I respectfully request a favorable report on Senate Bill 435.

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Uploaded by: Schneiderman, Franz

Position: FAV



Auto Consumer Alliance

13900 Laurel Lakes Avenue, Suite 100
Laurel, MD 20707

**Testimony to the House Environment and Transportation Committee
SB 435 – Vehicle Laws – Failure to Pay Video Toll – Reform of Penalties –
Position: Favorable**

Feb. 10, 2021

The Honorable Will Smith
Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East, Miller Senate Building
Annapolis, MD 21401
cc: Members, Judicial Proceedings Committee

Dear Chairman Smith and Committee Members,

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 **SB 435** because we believe Maryland's existing practice of suspending vehicle registrations over relatively small toll debts is unduly punitive – especially for lower-income drivers who can quickly fall into debt traps as a result of Maryland's high fines and aggressive collection practices. Discontinuing the practice of suspending registrations as a result of those fines would relieve some of that pressure – and also prevent some of those who struggle to pay these fines from facing still greater legal difficulties as they continue to drive (on suspended tags) to get to work and meet their other needs.

These suspensions impact a great many Marylanders. Between 2015 and 2018, the MdTA put a hold on the renewal of vehicle registrations of more than 207,000 Marylanders and about 22,000 Marylanders had their vehicle tags suspended because of toll violations. The state's move to all-cashless tolling will very likely result in more fines assessed to those (often lower-income Marylanders) who lack an EZ Pass transponder – or as a result of EZ Pass system failure, slow EZ Pass billing, or drivers neglecting to properly replenish their accounts.

For too many Marylanders, these fines quickly become a kind of financial quicksand. They create a debt trap and a threat to the vehicle registrations they need to maintain to be able to get to work, pursue their education, or access the services and supports they and their families need.

Only eight states now suspend or revoke vehicle registrations for outstanding toll violations. Maryland can provide relief to hard-pressed residents by reducing our civil fines for toll violations and joining the 42 states that DO NOT suspend or revoke registrations for toll fines.

I urge you to give a **FAVORABLE** report to **SB 435**.

Sincerely,

Franz Schneiderman
Consumer Auto