

March 4, 2021

The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr.
Chair, Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East, Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Letter of Information – Senate Bill 879 – Vehicle Laws – Driver’s Licenses – Driver Skills Examinations

Dear Chairman Smith and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Transportation takes no position on Senate Bill 879 but offers the following information for the committee’s consideration.

Senate Bill 879 gives authority to MDOT Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA) to authorize approved drivers’ schools to conduct and administer the driver skills examination for driver license applicants. Licensed drivers’ schools authorized by MDOT MVA must conduct the driver’s skills examination using approved methods and can only do so when in a memorandum of understanding which can be terminated by MDOT MVA.

Senate Bill 879 would have significant and far-reaching changes to the current methods by which MDOT MVA conducts drivers’ skills testing and ensures licenses are issued only to those demonstrating the capacity to operate a motor vehicle safely in Maryland. There are approximately 482 driving school branches in Maryland. MDOT MVA would need to ensure quality assurance for any testing that is completed at driving schools. MDOT MVA would need to ensure consistency between the way the tests are being conducted and the standards that are currently utilized at MDOT MVA branch offices. The Schools would need the proper resources to conduct the skills test, ensure staff has been properly trained, and ensure they are complying with the regulations. Approximately 91,000 people complete driving education annually, and MDOT MVA administers approximately 167,000 skills test per year.

MDOT MVA has a dedicated staff of inspectors that currently audit the driving schools for compliance. This staff would have to increase if skills tests were implemented in the schools. It is not clear in Senate Bill 879 if the schools may charge a fee for the exam. Many important details would have to be negotiated such as whether the tester would have to return to an MDOT MVA branch to complete the licensing transaction, whether the schools would be authorized to collect the driver license fee on behalf of the administration, how to adapt a driving course and road course for all potentially interested schools, and how to address test failures.

The Maryland Department of Transportation Motor Vehicle Administration respectfully requests the Committee take this information into consideration when deliberating Senate Bill 879.

Respectfully submitted,

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

Melissa Einhorn
State Legislative Officer
Maryland Department of Transportation
410-865-1102