

March 4, 2021

Hello, my name is Chip Sheehan and I am the President and co-owner of Street Smarts of Maryland. Prior to becoming co-owner of Street Smarts, I spent 29 of my 33 years as the lead driving instructor with the United States Secret Service. As the lead driving instructor, I was responsible for teaching driver training to all of the Agents who were selected to drive the President, Vice-President as well as other high-ranking dignitaries who would visit the United States. Based upon my training, knowledge and experience, I am considered a SUBJECT MATTER EXPERT in all aspects of teaching driver training. In addition to having taught driver training all over world, I was also the Agent personally selected to teach the children of several Presidents and Vice-Presidents how to drive.

On the first day after my retirement from the U.S. Secret Service, I was at the MVA Headquarters in Glen Burnie as I was selected to serve on the committee that helped to re-write the current driver education curriculum for the State of Maryland. Since the inception of Street Smarts, myself and along with my staff have helped to train over 10,000 new teen drivers in the State of Maryland.

I come to you today to support Senate Bill 897 and to support the passage of Third Party Driver Testing in the State of Maryland.

Needless to say, driver education has changed dramatically since many of us first received our licenses. The cars we drive have changed. The technology that is found in our cars has changed. But the one thing that hasn't changed in the last 50 plus years is how we allow our teen drivers to obtain their licenses.

Regardless of our current COVID19 restrictions, students need to make appointments that they often have to wait weeks for in order to take their driving test. Because appointments are hard to get, parents will often need to take off from work in order to make their teen's driver licensing appointment. And MVA testing sites haven't kept up with the growing population within our State. In some Counties – and I name Howard County as an example – parents and students need to drive to either Glen Burnie or out to Frederick or Westminster to take their tests.

Nowadays, many companies teach their employees to think outside the box and to help come up with plans to meet today's changing world. I believe bringing Third Party Testing to the State of Maryland is just one way we can assist the MVA to "think outside the box." With the passage of this bill, we will make it a better, more convenient and less costly system for everyone.

As a SUBJECT MATTER EXPERT on driver education, I have tried to look at this topic through multiple lenses. As my time is limited, I'll briefly try to address some of the concerns and questions that you may have on THIRD PARTY TESTING:

FIRST: CURRENT LICENSING AGENTS at the MVA – to the best of my knowledge – are not even licensed driver education instructors. According to MVA Administrators, the examiners follow the standards of the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators and they've been trained to only administer the licensing exam. The Examiners have not gone through the extensive apprentice and licensing procedures that are necessary to become a fully certified driver education instructor. So in my professional opinion, I believe that having a certified, licensed driver education instructor is a better person to administer a driver's test than just an Agent at the MVA who was trained in nothing more

than how to just administer the licensing exam. And it should not take the MVA much effort or cost to teach a certified driving instructor how to administer the final licensing exam.

As the State of Maryland already has certified driver education instructors with the ability to sign off on a student's ability to test for their license, then the MVA should also be professional enough to realize that a certified driving instructor should also be as capable - if not more capable - to administer the final exam as well.

SECOND: ROUTE PLANNING: Prior to COVID19 restrictions being put into place, each student was required to take an on-the-road assessment of their driving abilities. In order to become a certified driver education company, route plans had to be developed and approved by the MVA. Our instructors already follow these route plans for each student lesson – so developing a route plan that can be utilized for a student's final evaluation for licensing is an easy task to accomplish.

THIRD: CONVENIENCE: MVA locations are backed up and it can take weeks for a student to be able to schedule a test. While some of this current delay is attributable to COVID19, even prior to the pandemic it would still take weeks in the summer for students to be able to schedule an appointment for their license examination. As I mentioned previously, if you live in Howard County there is not even a location within the County that you take your child to test for their license.

By offering Third Party Testing sites at various certified driver education schools throughout the State, you will bring about much needed convenience to many parents and their new teen driver. Third party testing sites will enable the parents to schedule their child's driving test around what's convenient with their schedule and not just when the next appointment is available at the MVA. Third Party testing sites at certified driver education schools could also have weekend or late afternoon hours – something that I don't foresee ever happening at the MVA.

FOURTH: THIRD PARTY TESTING IS JUST AN OPTION: We are not saying that the MVA needs to move away from providing driver licensing examinations at their local branch facilities. What we believe is a good and right move for the State is to provide parents with the option of having their child take their final driver examination test at a location closer to home and at a location that will provide them with greater scheduling flexibility. If the parents still want to travel to the MVA so that their child can test for their license – that's fine and we support that option. However, look at the time that could be saved for the parent and for the child by allowing them the option of scheduling their test within their local community and around their work and school events.

FIFTH: THIRD PARTY PROVIDERS have already been sanctioned by the MVA and by other areas of State and Local Government. Look how many Tag and Title Companies we have in the State of Maryland. These companies provide a valuable service to the State and they provide a convenience factor that is not found with our current driver licensing examinations. The MVA was able to put procedures into place for citizens to be able to obtain and return Maryland tags at certified Tag and Title Providers. Our proposal for Third Party testing is not much different than what these companies currently offer. These companies already have technical access to the MVA. And in fact, each driver education provider already electronically updates their student's submissions directly to the MVA. So developing the computer access to the MVA system should not be an unworkable problem to overcome.

SIXTH: THIRD PARTY TESTING has the potential to provide significant cost savings to our State Government for many years down the road. How much does it cost to staff all the MVA locations with licensing examiners? What are the costs of their salaries, training as well as their health, vacation and retirement benefits? If this bill is passed, Third Party Testing Centers have the ability to save the State many of these significant costs. Instead of hiring 7-10 examiners per location, the MVA may be able to eventually reduce their staffing levels at each of their locations once Third Party Testing Sites become operational and begin to take the workload off of the MVA facilities. Multiply this potential savings with the number of testing sites being operated by the MVA now and this could be a real and significant cost savings to the State of Maryland for years to come.

SEVENTH: QUALITY CONTROL of Third Party Testing Providers could be completed by the same Quality Inspectors already on staff with the MVA and who already inspect each Driver Education Provider. These Quality Inspectors already come out to each driving school several times per year while conducting both announced and unannounced inspections of our facilities. During these inspections, they can certainly conduct additional audits of a provider's Third Party Testing Files.

IN CONCLUSION: As I've highlighted above, there are many positive reasons why I support this bill and why I believe approving THIRD PARTY TESTING is the right way to go in the State of Maryland.

The State has already mandated an extensive apprentice and licensing program that each instructor must successfully complete in order to become a certified Driver education provider in the State of Maryland. In my professional opinion, we should try to capitalize on this investment and training and be able to utilize this experience for the benefit of all Marylanders.

In the end, not only will you be providing a degree of convenience and flexibility to the parents and teens that come through such a program, but hopefully save money over the years by reducing the workload at each MVA facility.

While I realize that such a program will not happen overnight, having this legislation enacted now will put the first step in the process that will allow the MVA to develop such a program. In partnership with other Driver Education providers, I believe the MVA could develop a first rate Third Party Testing program here in the State of Maryland that could set the standards for other states to emulate in the future.

For these reasons plus others, I respectfully request that this legislation on Third Party Testing be approved by this Committee and by the State Legislature.

Sincerely,

Chip Sheehan
President
Street Smarts of Maryland