



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 552

Motor Vehicle Insurance Use of Credit History Rating Policy

Senate Finance Committee

February 17, 2021

Submitted by Stacey Jefferson and Julia Gross, Co-Chairs

Member Agencies:

Advocates for Children and Youth
Baltimore Jewish Council
Behavioral Health System Baltimore
CASH Campaign of Maryland
Catholic Charities
Episcopal Diocese of Maryland
Family League of Baltimore
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Maryland Community Action
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Marylanders Against Poverty

Stacey Jefferson, Co-Chair
P: 410-637-1900 ext 8578
C: 443-813-9231

E: stacey.jefferson@bhsbaltimore.org

Julia Gross, Co-Chair
P: 410-528-0021x6029

E: jgross@mdhungersolutions.org

Marylanders Against Poverty (MAP) strongly supports SB 552, which limits insurance companies' ability to adjust auto insurance rates based on a driver's credit history.

Lack of affordable auto insurance is a significant barrier to obtaining employment in Maryland. Nationally, Maryland ranks 2nd behind New York in the longest commute to work, as Marylanders spend an average of 32 minutes driving to their job¹. Workers in Maryland need a car to access employment opportunities, and to support their families. Unfortunately, the high cost of car insurance often makes reliable transportation too expensive for low-income families and is a leading reason why some Maryland drivers don't have even the minimum liability insurance state law requires.

Currently, auto insurance companies are permitted to use factors unrelated to a person's driving record in determining rates. As a result, major insurance companies in Maryland increase rates based on gender, homeownership status, marital status, employment and occupation, education level, and credit score. In fact, companies can issue a surcharge for as much as 40% for a person who has a low credit score. Further, poor credit has a bigger impact on your premium than a DWI conviction for Maryland drivers². Such policies disproportionately harm drivers who face financial hardship.

SB 552 promotes access to transportation for low-income drivers by prohibiting insurance companies from using credit history to establish rates. Hawaii, California, and Massachusetts restrict the use of credit in auto insurance rate setting and we believe Maryland should as well. By amending what factors are allowed to be considered in calculating auto insurance rates, SB 552 will simultaneously increase safety standards as more Marylanders will be insured, while eliminating barriers to employment and economic stability for low-income Marylanders.

MAP appreciates your consideration and urges the committee to issue a favorable report for SB 552.

Marylanders Against Poverty (MAP) is a coalition of service providers, faith communities, and advocacy organizations advancing statewide public policies and programs necessary to alleviate the burdens faced by Marylanders living in or near poverty, and to address the underlying systemic causes of poverty.

¹ US Census. American Community Survey – 2016.

https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/isf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_16_5YR_S0802&prodType=table

² <https://www.consumerreports.org/cro/car-insurance/credit-scores-affect-auto-insurance-rates/index.htm>