

CATHI FORBES  
Legislative District 42A  
Baltimore County

Appropriations Committee



The Maryland House of Delegates  
6 Bladen Street, Room 304  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
410-841-3487 • 301-858-3487  
800-492-7122 Ext. 3487  
Catherine.Forbes@house.state.md.us

## *The Maryland House of Delegates*

ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Testimony in Support of HB 1025**  
**Vehicle Laws – Driver Education – Self-Paced Online Instruction**  
Testimony of Delegate Cathi Forbes  
Hearing March 3, 2022 at 1:00 pm  
Environment and Transportation

### ***What this bill does***

This bill would allow adults, 21 and older, to satisfy the required 30 hours of classroom driver education by taking an online, self-paced course.

### ***Why this bill matters***

Unlike neighboring states, Maryland requires all first-time candidates for a driver's license, regardless of age, to complete a standard driver education program approved by the state. Driver education in Maryland includes at least 30 hours of classroom instruction, and at least 6 hours of behind-the-wheel driving instruction.

To working adults without a driver's license, attending 30 hours of in-person classes may be a barrier to licensing. This bill would allow people who choose this option to cover the same material in an online, self-paced program, during hours that are most convenient for their lives.

This bill would not require all driving schools to offer this option. It would also not change the requirement for students to take at least 6 hours of in-person, behind-the-wheel driving instruction.

All Maryland driver education courses would continue to be taught by Maryland MVA licensed and approved driver education schools and required to use MVA-approved standardized curriculum.

### ***Who benefits from this bill***

Working adults who would like to get their driver's license will benefit from the flexibility an online course allows. Additionally, this may lower the cost for first time licensee driver education courses which currently run up to \$600.

### ***What neighboring states require:***

- [Delaware](#): There is no requirement to complete driver education if you are over the age of 18. If you are under 18, [driver education is offered by law at all public and most non-public high schools in Delaware for free](#). For those under 18, the required classes consist of 30 hours of classroom time, 7 hours of behind-the-wheel driving instruction, and 7 hours of in-car observation.
- [Pennsylvania](#): There is no requirement to complete driver education. If you are under 18, your parent or guardian must submit a [form](#) stating that the new driver has completed at least 65 hours of practical driving experience with a licensed driver 21 or older.

Pennsylvania does offer a state-approved online class that is self-paced and available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Students can start the program, save their work, and go back as often as they want to finish it. Although not required, students take advantage of this, and often take behind-the-wheel driver education courses, because it may lower insurance rates for those under 25.

- [Virginia](#) only requires new adult driving applicants to take driver education if they want to waive the requirement of holding a learner's permit for 60 days before taking the road skills test. Additionally, for permit holders under 18, who are required to take driver education, [they can substitute an online](#), self-paced course for the required 36-hour classroom course.
- [West Virginia](#): Does not require driver education for any first time drivers.
- [Washington DC](#): Does not require driver education for any first time drivers.

### ***Why you should vote for this bill***

Expanding access to driver education is a matter of equity. While some may have the time and financial means to attend an in-person 30-hour class, others do not. Lower-income adults in particular often have work schedules with varying hours, including at night. They may also be raising a family or paying caregivers, creating even more challenges for sitting in a classroom. The cost, both in time and in money, is an unnecessary barrier for those seeking a driver's license.

Our method of driver education in Maryland has been unchanged for decades. Meanwhile, the world continues to evolve. Technology has changed the way we vote, communicate, and meet. We offer all kinds of college courses, and continuing education courses online. We know this is possible, as other states are doing it. It's time we move driver education in to the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

I ask for a favorable report.

Thank you.