
March 29, 2022

The Honorable Kumar P. Barve
Chairman, House Environment and Transportation Committee
Room 251, House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Letter of Information – Senate Bill 599 – Vehicle Laws – Driver’s Licenses – Driver Skills Examinations

Dear Chairman Barve and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) takes no position on Senate Bill 599 but offers the following information for the Committee’s consideration.

As amended, Senate Bill 599 gives the MDOT Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA) the authority to conduct a pilot program for driver’s education schools in Montgomery and Howard Counties to administer driver skills examinations for driver license applicants. Licensed and authorized driver’s schools must conduct the driver’s skills examination using approved methods under a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the MDOT MVA or the MDOT MVA will terminate their authorization. It further requires driver’s schools to only utilize testers who have two years of experience as a Driver’s License Agent (DLA).

Senate Bill 599 would require significant changes to the current methods by which the MDOT MVA conducts driver skills testing and issues licenses. Under Senate Bill 599, the MDOT MVA would be responsible for ensuring consistency among the driver’s education schools, including that they obtain the proper resources for testing, how tests are conducted, staff training, and compliance with additional standards and regulations currently met by the MDOT MVA branch offices. Approximately 72,092 people complete driver’s education annually, the MDOT MVA administers approximately 163,279 skills tests per year, and there are approximately 373 driving school branches in Maryland.

Senate Bill 599 requires driving schools to be licensed under § 15–803 in order to conduct driver skills examinations for non-commercial Class A, Class B, Class C, and Class M tests. However, no driving schools would qualify for Class A, Class B, or Class M skills tests because these classes are not licensed under § 15–803. Class A and Class B instructors are licensed by the Higher Education Commission and Class M is licensed under § 16-604. This would automatically result in denial of any applicant seeking authority to administer Class A, Class B, or Class M driver skills tests. Senate Bill 599 further compounds this contradiction in requiring instructor certification under § 15–803 on page two, line four-six. This certification is obtained by the instructor, not by the school.

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Under requirements for employees of driving schools set by Senate Bill 599, DLAs employed by the driving school must have a minimum of two years of experience to administer tests. This standard would inhibit approval for driving schools to qualify for the pilot program. The MDOT MVA currently has an established process for DLA training and certification based on high standards established by the MDOT MVA. The MDOT MVA currently has a lead employee train new DLAs on how to conduct a non-commercial skills tests based on the high standards established by the MDOT MVA. No independent tests can be administered by the DLA trainee until these standards are met.

The MDOT MVA has a dedicated staff of inspectors that currently audit the driving schools for compliance in their current capacities. To implement the original version of Senate Bill 599 which required statewide implementation raised a number of questions that remain unaddressed. The MDOT MVA believes these questions require careful study of the full scope of ethical and practical challenges by such a change in the providing of skills test examinations. The amendments to Senate Bill 599 creating a pilot study would allow a proper opportunity to fully examine the challenges such a change could encompass and prevent unforeseen complications that a statewide implementation would be unable to address.

The Maryland Department of Transportation respectfully requests the Committee consider this information when deliberating Senate Bill 599.

Respectfully submitted,

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