
March 3, 2022

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

***Re: Letter of Information – House Bill 1121 – Driver’s Licenses, Identification Cards, and
Registration Plates – Notation for Autism Spectrum***

Dear Chairman Barve and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) takes no position on House Bill 1121 but offers the following information for the Committee’s consideration.

House Bill 1121 would require the MDOT Motor Vehicle Administration (MDOT MVA) to provide a notated registration tag to applicants who disclose that they are on the Autism Spectrum and indicate this information on the applicant’s identification card or driver’s license.

To maintain driver safety, the MDOT MVA has established a list of medical conditions in COMAR that must be reported to the MDOT MVA and is reviewed by the Medical Advisory Board (MAB). Included on that list is any mental health condition that would impact the ability to drive; depending on the severity of an individual’s symptoms of Autism Spectrum Disorder, they may be required to disclose this information to the MDOT MVA. How the MDOT MVA then proceeds depends on the physical and mental manifestations of each individual customer and what restriction(s) or action(s) may need to be taken. As a result of disclosures made by applicants to the MDOT MVA under House Bill 1121, additional individuals may need to be reviewed by the MAB.

Currently, the MDOT MVA provides upon request a Developmental Disability Disclosure Card, a blue card the size of a driver's license that includes space for an individual to provide details of a developmental disability and gives guidance on effective communication between law enforcement officers and those with developmental disabilities. To obtain a voluntary Developmental Disability Disclosure Card, customers can visit the information desk at any of MDOT MVA’s 24 branches statewide during normal business hours. The MDOT MVA does not require that customers, parents, or guardians to disclose or present documentation of a disability to obtain this card. Law enforcement has been provided training on the Developmental Disability Disclosure Card and how to best engage with the driver when presented with the card.

House Bill 1121 also requires a notation on a registration tag. This would not be removeable and may cause confusion if another individual is operating the vehicle and is stopped by law enforcement. Other states, such as Delaware, Virginia, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia, offer drivers who are deaf or hard of hearing a visor card.

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While registration tags are permanently affixed to a vehicle regardless of the driver, visor cards can be stored or affixed to a vehicle's sun visor and provided to law enforcement officials during a traffic stop, offering flexibility of use by the operator.

The Maryland Department of Transportation respectfully requests the Committee consider this information when deliberating House Bill 1121.

Respectfully submitted,

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