

Del. Forbes Testimony HB1025 Driver Education - Se

Uploaded by: Susan Parts

Position: FAV

CATHI FORBES
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Appropriations Committee



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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 21st century.

I ask for a favorable report.

Thank you.

HB1025_FWA_Sheehan

Uploaded by: Chip Sheehan

Position: FWA

March 3, 2022

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 serving 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 along with my staff have helped to train over 10,000 new teen drivers in the State of Maryland.

Based upon my knowledge, training and experience, I write to you today to support House Bill 1025 with the following stipulations:

In my opinion, Maryland has a fine driver education curriculum as well an abundance of qualified driver education schools. If Maryland were to allow a self-paced driver education course, then the law should reflect that only licensed MVA driver education schools within the State of Maryland should be able to provide this online curriculum. Should a student need any clarification for any part of the curriculum that they do not understand, then they at least have a resource to call to ask their questions.

Additionally, I would also like to see a requirement that any Maryland driving school that offers such an online, self-paced curriculum must be currently licensed by the State of Maryland and be in good standing with the MVA for at least five consecutive (5) years. I make this recommendation knowing that without such conditions, it would be possible for out-of-state companies to come into Maryland quickly to offer such online driver education courses. As any small business owner knows, it takes many years to build and grow a business and allowing out-of-state companies an opportunity to offer an online driver education course in Maryland could potentially put many of our current driver education companies out of business.

Needless to say, the past two (2) years have been very difficult for all businesses – to include driver education companies here in Maryland. Now that the economy is starting to re-open, I would hope that House Bill 1025 takes into consideration the livelihood of our small, driver education companies and that this bill will only allow licensed Maryland driving schools to offer self-paced, online classes.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Chip Sheehan

President

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HB1025 - MVA – Driver Education – Self-Paced, Onli

Uploaded by: Patricia Westervelt

Position: INFO



Larry Hogan
Governor
Boyd K. Rutherford
Lt. Governor
James F. Ports, Jr.
Secretary

March 3, 2022

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

**Re: Letter of Information – House Bill 1025 – Vehicle Laws – Driver Education – Self-Paced,
Online Instruction**

Dear Chairman Barve and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) takes no position on House Bill 1025 but offers the following information for the Committee's consideration.

House Bill 1025 would allow certain individuals to complete a driver's education course via a self-paced, online format. This online-only format would be available to individuals who are at least 18 years old and hold a high school diploma or are at least 19 years old. The self-paced, online course would require 30 hours of classroom-based instruction and at least six hours of highway driving instruction.

The MDOT Motor Vehicle Administration (MDOT MVA) is responsible for developing the curriculum taught in driver's education courses and oversees the approximately 373 driver education schools throughout Maryland that offer these courses. While the MDOT MVA offers online remote learning, this format is required to have active classroom participation with a live instructor, similar to the instruction provided by an in-person classroom.

Any online-only curriculum would require developing a new curriculum to ensure the proper individual is taking the course, and is fully engaged at all times, including during the necessary educational quizzes. Additionally, the MDOT MVA would need the ability to audit this new format, similar to how the in-person classroom environment is audited. Further, students will still need to arrange for behind the wheel instruction with an instructor.

While emerging technologies are becoming available for online instruction and there has been discussion on these developments, there is yet to be a consensus on how to proceed. The MDOT MVA believes a study of these new technologies and how they can be adapted to driver education courses would be beneficial prior to moving forward with the alternative education mediums established by House Bill 1025.

The Maryland Department of Transportation respectfully requests the Committee consider this information when deliberating House Bill 1025.

Respectfully submitted,

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Maryland Department of Transportation
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