

OLD LINE INVESTIGATIVE SERVICES

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March 2, 2022

**Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401**

RE: SB 701 Vehicle Laws - Window Tinting Materials - Private Detectives

Dear Chairman Smith and Committee Members:

My name is Caitlin Kelley and I live in Owings Mills, which is the district for Senator Shelly Hettleman. I own a Private Investigative agency and my office is located in the old Baltimore County jail, now known as Bosley Hall in Towson, which is Senator Chis West's district. Currently, I have the privilege of serving as the Vice President of Investigations for the Maryland Investigators and Security Association. I have been a private investigator for many years and started my agency in 2016; therefore, I have learned that the most valuable tool to be safe and effective while doing my job is the dark tint on my vehicle windows.

While there is a somewhat cinematic perception of what Private Investigators do, our actual day-to-day entails playing a critical role in our judicial system. This includes locating missing persons, witnesses, or defendants; surveillance for domestic investigations when there is suspicion of child abuse/neglect or infidelity; surveillance on individuals with personal injury claim lawsuits when there is suspicion of fraud. Many times, we are called upon to help serve the public where the state and local governments run short of time and resources.

Private investigators often work solo due to client budget limitations and are often in areas where they are attractive targets to criminal opportunists. Private Investigators can all relate to surveilling a residence on a given case or watching for subjects who are evading service of process, with the hope of serving them court documents. Without our vehicles having the darkest level of tint, these are situations where the observation of a stranger sitting in an unfamiliar vehicle in the neighborhood can be enough for some people to warrant acts of aggression. Having the dark window tint can also be an aid to going about our investigations without alarming the otherwise law-abiding residents of an area who look upon strangers and unknown vehicles with concern. While our organization understands and agrees with the basic fact that we are not law enforcement and therefore do not have law enforcement powers or the safety supports of law enforcement

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officials, we believe that some small steps can be taken to ensure our safety on the job and mitigate the risk of danger and conflict throughout the course of our work.

I could reference many examples of situations that I have personally experienced while doing surveillance where either having or not having the dark tint on my vehicle impacted my ability to do my job safely, but since I am sensitive to your time, I will share only one example with you. One day in 2019, while doing surveillance on a suspected infidelity case in the Park Heights area of Baltimore, about 6 adult men that presumably lived in the area, surrounded by vehicle that was parked on the street. I had the darkest level of tint possible on my side and back windows and sunshades across my front window, with the intention of not being visible inside my vehicle. The men surrounding my vehicle were making comments to each other wanting to know who the vehicle belonged to and if anyone was inside. They began pressing their face against the windows attempting to see inside. I was in the back seat of my vehicle at this point. In that moment, I prayed to myself that these men would not be able to see me through the tinted windows, as I instinctively knew that I was in a very dangerous situation. After what seemed like forever, I heard the men commenting about how they couldn't see anything through the tint, and the men eventually dispersed and walked away. I do not like to think about how that scenario could have played out if I didn't have the dark tint on my vehicle.

With no current window tint exemption, Private Investigators still must get the dark tint on their windows to safely and effectively do surveillance, knowing that they are at risk for being pulled over and given a repair order to remove that tint. And should that happen, Private Investigators will have to go through removing the tint to satisfy the repair order, all to inevitably have tint placed immediately back on the windows so they can continue to do their job.

We believe that SB701, which will grant an exemption from the state's window tinting regulations for Licensed Private Investigators, is a small step that will go a long way to granting us protection and discretion during our critical work. Legislation to this effect has been passed in states such as Massachusetts, Georgia, Florida, and Tennessee, and we hope Maryland will also take this step and add to the tint exemption laws we currently have.

I want to thank Chairman Smith and the rest of the Committee for all your historic work throughout this legislative session and please contact myself or our association if you have any further questions on this issue.

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I urge you to give a Favorable Report to SB 701.

Sincerely,

Caitlin Kelley

Owner of Old Line Investigative Services

VP of Investigations for the MD Investigators and Security Association

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