



**State of Maryland**  
**Department of State Police**  
Government Affairs Section  
Annapolis Office (410) 260-6100

**POSITION ON PROPOSED LEGISLATION**

**DATE:** March 9, 2023

**BILL NUMBER:** House Bill 1029 **Position:** Oppose

**BILL TITLE:** Public Safety – Lights On for Maryland program - Establishment

**REVIEW AND ANALYSIS**

This legislation establishes a Lights On for Maryland Program grant within the Governor’s Office of Crime Prevention, Youth, and Victim Services (GOCPYVS). The grant is designed to provide vouchers, valued up to \$250 each, to individuals detained by law enforcement to cover the costs of repairing headlights, tail lights, turn signals, etc. A law enforcement officer would be required to issue a voucher to certain segments of the motoring population. The bill further mandates that the Maryland Department of State Police (MDSP) shall participate and provide 100% of matching funds for the vouchers used by MDSP.

Under current law, some grants issued by GOCPYVS do require matching funds to ensure the police agency has a stake in the successful operation of the grant. All grants are discretionary on the part of the police agency. Police agencies determine which grants to apply for based on their communities needs and the priorities of the agency. Never before has a law enforcement agency been required to apply for a grant, use funds budgeted for other priorities to match the grant, and distribute money in the form of vouchers, worth \$250, to a limited number of drivers.

House Bill 1029 creates several problems for the MDSP. The bill requires the MDSP to implement the grant at three barracks to start and after one year take the program statewide. \$20,000 only pays for 80 vouchers. In three barracks that’s not enough for even one voucher per trooper. That means the MDSP has to commit a substantial amount of general funds to make the program work. MSP would have to decide which program funding needs to be cut or underfunded so that a mandated grant program can proceed.

Additionally, the legislation places a huge burden on the Trooper required to possess and distribute these vouchers. The bill does not provide details or guidance on to whom the vouchers are to be issued. If a Trooper gives a voucher to one person but not another, the officer will be accused of favoritism, racial profiling, or discrimination. MDSP believes everyone should be treated fairly. But this mandated program puts Troopers in an untenable position of having to decide who gets a voucher worth \$250. MDSP can expect drivers to stop in the barrack and ask for vouchers once the word gets out.

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The legislative mandate would also require MSP to account for every voucher because they are like cash. Every traffic stop where a voucher is issued will have to be documented and the information as to who received a voucher recorded. There is no mechanism to determine if a driver has received multiple vouchers for the same violation.

Local law enforcement agencies have a better sense of the needs of their communities. If the grant is designed to help low income driver's who need assistance with repairs, let the local law enforcement agencies who know their neighborhoods decide if they want to participate and where the grant should be targeted. Most importantly no police agency should be forced to use their general funds to match a grant of this type. Today's budgets are tight enough. Grants for this type of program should be discretionary and left to the local police agencies who work within their communities.

For these reasons, the Maryland Department of State Police urges the Committee to give House Bill 1029 an unfavorable report.