



Testimony to the House Environment & Transportation Committee
HB828: Motor Vehicle Administration - Fines and Fees - Required Notice
Position: Favorable

February 23, 2023

The Honorable Kumar P. Barve, Chair
Environment and Transportation Committee
Room 251, HOB
Annapolis, MD 21401
cc: Members, Environment and Transportation Committee

Honorable Chair Barve and Members of the Committee:

Economic Action Maryland (formerly the Maryland Consumer Rights Coalition) is a people-centered movement to expand economic rights, housing justice, and community reinvestment for working families, low-income communities, and communities of color. Economic Action Maryland provides direct assistance today while passing legislation and regulations to create systemic change in the future.

We are writing in support of HB828.

Discovering that your car has been towed is a terrible surprise. For many Marylanders, the consequences of a towed vehicle can be extremely devastating. A towed vehicle may mean the permanent loss of a person's only source of reliable transportation to work, the loss of which could result in unemployment and loss of access to education and health care.

While a towed vehicle can catch anyone off guard, the fees charged for towing and storage are not the same across the state. Maryland nominally sets the fee at \$250 per trespass tow, it allows counties to set their rate at a higher amount. The maximum towing fee allowed for a vehicle is over \$300 in Baltimore City and Anne Arundel County which is more than double the fee in Washington, D.C., and most other jurisdictions.¹

The loss of a vehicle, even temporarily, combined with the high fees associated with a towed vehicle's release can further exacerbate existing racial disparities in car ownership, transportation equity, and economic opportunity.

Maryland is one of many states that have inadequate protections, or the laws on the books are vague and inaccessible to the average consumer.² HB828 helps correct this lack of protection by setting clear and reasonable maximum rates for involuntary tows and maximum rates for daily storage.

For these reasons, we support HB828 and urge a favorable report.

Best,

Isadora Stern
Policy Manager

¹<https://baltimorebrew.com/2022/10/04/with-towing-reform-shot-down-by-the-city-council-high-fees-and-aggressive-practices-will-continue-in-baltimore/>

²<https://pirg.org/maryland/media-center/report-getting-off-the-hook-of-a-predatory-tow-in-maryland/#::~:~:text=In%20the%20case%20of%20an%20involuntary%20tow%2C%20towing%20companies%20can,law%20enforcement%20of%20the%20towing.>