



# Maryland Motor Truck Association

9256 Bendix Road, Suite 203, Columbia, MD 21045

Phone: 410-644-4600 Fax: 410-644-2537



**HEARING DATE:** February 14, 2024

**BILL NO/TITLE:** **Senate Bill 566 – Education - Transporting Students and Jobs That Require Driving - Authorization and Requirements (Drivers Education for Good Jobs Act of 2024)**

**COMMITTEE:** Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment

**POSITION:** **Support**

Maryland Motor Truck Association offers its support for SB566, which would require the creation of a statewide career and technical education pathway for high school students to prepare for a career that requires driving skills and a driver's license.

The trucking industry is suffering from a massive labor shortage of drivers. National data from the American Trucking Associations indicates the current shortfall is roughly 80,000 drivers. Virtually every company that operates commercial trucks needs more drivers.

The lack of drivers has impaired an already fragile supply chain. Maryland's transportation system is the backbone of its commercial activity, with trucks providing the integral link for the state's rail system, the Thurgood Marshall BWI Airport, and the Port of Baltimore. Trucks are the hub of Maryland's distribution wheel, playing a vital role in the state's economic development as they safely and efficiently support the state's manufacturing, agricultural, and retail industries. Over 92 percent of Maryland's communities are served exclusively by truck, meaning that is the only way they get their goods. Without truck drivers, America's economy stops.

For many years, attracting younger drivers to the trucking industry was nearly impossible due to Federal age limits preventing 18-to-20 year-olds from hauling interstate freight. While all 50 states allow 18-year-olds to obtain a commercial driver's license, the Federal ban meant an 18-year-old adult could drive from Sacramento, California to San Diego, California (547 miles) or El Paso, Texas to Houston, Texas (744 miles) without issue, but could not drive along I-81 from Hagerstown, Maryland to Chambersburg, Pennsylvania (23 miles). This is extremely problematic for smaller states, or those whose major population centers and commerce routes are near the state's borders. However, the passage of the Federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act included a pilot program to allow 3,000 younger adult drivers between ages 18 to 20 with a CDL to cross state lines after receiving additional training and if using vehicles equipped with extra safety technologies. There are also local driving jobs that operate entirely in Maryland in industries like construction.

Williamsport High School in Washington County has become the first program in Maryland to enroll seniors in courses that will prepare them to take a commercial learners permit test. These students can then feed directly into the CDL training program at Hagerstown Community College. This should be occurring in counties across the state. The path to the middle class is changing. According to the American Transportation Research Institute, the average wage for a heavy-truck driver is approximately \$70,000 per year. For many commercial drivers a six-figure income is possible. There are vital industries in today's economy that offer opportunities for steady, good-paying jobs without the financial burden of a college degree. Trucking is one of those. MMTA believes the passage of SB566 will help promote driving as a career and encourages the Committee to offer a favorable report.

**About Maryland Motor Truck Association:** Maryland Motor Truck Association is a non-profit trade association that has represented the trucking industry since 1935. In service to its 1,000 members, MMTA is committed to support, advocate and educate for a safe, efficient and profitable trucking industry in Maryland.

**For further information, contact:** Louis Campion, (c) 443-623-5663