



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

SB10: Defaced License Plates

Judicial Proceedings Committee

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Defaced license plates can make vehicles nearly undetectable to enforcement technology. Although tinted license plate covers were outlawed in 1995 in my first bill ([Md. Code, Transp. § 13-411.1](#)), the problem of illegible plates has recently escalated. This issue poses significant challenges in:

- Identifying red light violators;
- Effectively utilizing speed cameras;
- Solving hit-and-run accidents;
- Tracking down gas station pump-and-run perpetrators;
- Finding suspects with outstanding warrants;
- Locating missing persons through Amber & Silver Alerts; and
- Charging tolls for those without an E-ZPass.

Obscured license plates not only compromise safety but also divert revenue. According to a study by the AAA Foundation, speed cameras contributed [\\$64 million](#) to Maryland's revenue in 2018. Combined with red light cameras, it is estimated that enforcement cameras now generate at least \$100 million annually for the State. Illegible license plates are also problematic for toll collection, which uses cameras to charge those without E-ZPasses.

For reference, [7.38%](#) of license plates captured by enforcement cameras in New York City were unreadable in August of 2022, costing [\\$3,294,746](#). Ultimately, the City lost [\\$46 million](#) in revenue from uncollected tolls in 2022 alone.

To address these challenges, [SB10](#) proposes the following penalties:

- For a first offense, a warning; and
- For a second or subsequent offense, 3 points will be assessed.

While some license plates are intentionally obscured to evade cameras, others become illegible through natural deterioration. SB10 proposes a replacement program for any standard-issue license plates over 15 years old, expanding an existing MVA pilot program.

Twenty-four other states¹ have enacted similar legislation.

The following amendments to SB10 have been requested:

- Special plates should be exempt from the MVA replacement program; and

¹ [AZ](#), [CA](#), [FL](#), [GA](#), [IL](#), [IN](#), [LA](#), [MI](#), [MN](#), [MS](#), [NE](#), [NV](#), [NH](#), [NJ](#), [NY](#), [NC](#), [ND](#), [PA](#), [SC](#), [SD](#), [TX](#), [UT](#), [WA](#), & [WV](#)

CHERYL C. KAGAN
Legislative District 17
Montgomery County

Vice Chair
Education, Energy, and
the Environment Committee

Joint Audit and Evaluation Committee
Joint Committee on Federal Relations



Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street, Suite 2 West
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
301-858-3134 · 410-841-3134
800-492-7122 Ext. 3134
Fax 301-858-3665 · 410-841-3665
Cheryl.Kagan@senate.state.md.us

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- There will be a 60-day grace period following a warning.

I urge a favorable report on SB10 as amended.