
January 31, 2024

The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr.
Chair, Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East, Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis MD 21401

RE: Letter of Support with Amendments – Senate Bill 10 – Vehicle Laws - Damaged, Obscured, or Modified Registration Plates

Dear Chair Smith and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) supports Senate Bill 10 with amendments and offers the following information for the Committee's consideration.

With respect to the operations of the Maryland Transportation Authority's (MDTA) EZ-Pass program, when a vehicle owner obscures or modifies their license plate, these actions can result in lost revenue due to either the notice of tolls due (NOTD) being sent to the incorrect customer or no transaction taking place as no vehicle owner can be identified. For reference, 388,295 and 380,491 obstructed plates were reported in calendar year 2022 and 2023 respectively. With respect to the penalty structure, current law affords law enforcement the discretion to issue either a warning or citation when a violation occurs, rather than requiring a penalty based on the number of offenses. Given that all law enforcement agencies in the State do not utilize the same citation reporting program, the current law would be preferred to allow law enforcement to make determinations on a case-by-case basis.

The MDOT Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA) has recently implemented an optional plate replacement program similar to the one outlined in Senate Bill 10. The pilot program informs all Class A and Class M vehicle owners that have standard issue plates fifteen years or older that they are eligible for replacement at no charge. During registration renewal, eligible customers have the option to indicate that they would like to replace their vehicle plates or continue to keep their existing plates. The MVA would support an amendment that would remove the requirement to provide replacement plates for Class D, Class E, Class G, Class L, and Class N vehicles and trailers in addition to special registration tags under Transportation Article § 13-619.2 as currently required in the bill. This will align the legislation with the current pilot program.

For these reasons, the Maryland Department of Transportation respectfully requests the Committee grant Senate Bill 10 a favorable report with the amendments described above.

Respectfully submitted,

Pilar Helm
Director of Government Affairs
Maryland Department of Transportation
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