



Maryland Chiefs of Police Association

Maryland Sheriffs' Association



MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable Marc Korman, Chair and
Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee

FROM: Darren Popkin, Executive Director, MCPA-MSA Joint Legislative Committee
Andrea Mansfield, Representative, MCPA-MSA Joint Legislative Committee
Samira Jackson, Representative, MCPA-MSA Joint Legislative Committee

DATE: February 6, 2025

RE: **HB 470 OBSCURED OR MODIFIED REGISTRATION PLATES**

POSITION: **SUPPORT**

The Maryland Chiefs of Police Association (MCPA) and the Maryland Sheriffs' Association (MSA) **SUPPORT HB 470**. This bill requires the Motor Vehicle Administration Maryland (MVA) to offer to replace any vehicle registration plates that are more than 15 years old. In tandem, this bill prohibits vehicle owners from obscuring or modifying a vehicle's registration plate in a way that **may** avoid identification.

Under HB 470, the language alters the current prohibition against obscuring or modifying a vehicle registration plate *with the intent to avoid identification* to language that includes the prohibition of any activity that *may prevent identification*, thus broadening the scope of the regulation. The bill also requires that a person must be issued a warning for a first-time offense, which gives the person an opportunity to cure the violation without an immediate penalty or fine. This bill allows the Police Chiefs and Sheriffs (PMC/MS) to perform our jobs more effectively and prohibits behavior that would make it challenging to identify vehicles in violation of the law. Additionally, this bill increases the efficacy of vehicle infraction cameras throughout the state.

Furthermore, in 2024 the MVA noted that there were at least 121,642 Class A and Class M vehicles with plates eligible to be replaced under the bill that are more than 15 years old. About 75% (91,319) were issued between 15 and 19 years ago, while the remaining plates (30,323) were issued 20 or more years ago. MVA estimates that as many as 50% of eligible vehicle owners (60,821) will take advantage of the opportunity to receive a set of replacement plates.

This bill would help to ensure that law enforcement, and law enforcement resources, can visibly see vehicle registration without obstruction. The bill amends the penalties for an obstructed or modified registration plate, allowing a person guilty of a violation an opportunity to remedy the obstruction or modification prior to assessing points against their license. For these reasons, MCPA and MSA **SUPPORT HB 470** and urge a **FAVORABLE** committee report.

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