
February 4, 2025

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

RE: Letter of Support - Senate Bill 471 - Vehicle Laws - Motor Vehicle Administration - 3-Hour Roadway Safety Driving Education Program

Dear Chair Smith and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) supports Senate Bill 471 as an important reform to improve driver education for certain Maryland driver's license applicants.

SB 471 replaces the current three (3)-hour alcohol and drug education program with a more comprehensive course that adds content focused on understanding signs, signals, pavement markings; dangerous driving behaviors; administrative penalties and sanctions; the driving record and points systems; and other relevant safety information. This added content is in addition to existing impaired and alcohol related topics that driver's license applicants in Maryland who have not previously held a license in another state or territory of the United States, but possess a valid driver's license from another country, must successfully complete before becoming licensed in Maryland.

This proposed legislation addresses shortcomings identified by the Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA) in existing curriculum required of new-to-country applicants. In a survey conducted by the MVA asking if course instructors found the existing curriculum adequate, over half of those surveyed indicated they did not, while 92% support expanding the topic material while keeping the course at 3-hours. Instructors further indicated added curriculum topics identified in the legislation as proposed were of particular importance in an updated curriculum to ensure new drivers are properly prepared for driving in Maryland.

The MVA supports SB 471 to better prepare drivers who have experience driving, but are not familiar with Maryland traffic rules, to be able to operate their vehicle safely in Maryland. Across the globe, the rules of the road, infrastructure design, and traffic-control devices can greatly vary, leading to confusing or dangerous situations for new-to-Maryland drivers. Stop light signals and patterns, four way stops, even driving on the right side of the road can be major differences for new Marylanders in this demographic. Updating curriculum to better prepare these individuals is an important safety update to make Maryland roads a safer and more welcoming place for everyone.

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In the drafting, there was a technical error in the bill as introduced. The MVA supports the forthcoming amendment to correct this and otherwise does not alter the substantive purpose of the proposed legislation.

For these reasons, the Maryland Department of Transportation respectfully requests the Committee grant Senate Bill 471 a favorable report.

Respectfully submitted,

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