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January 22, 2025

To: The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr.
Chair, Judicial Proceedings Committee

From: Karen S. Straughn
Consumer Protection Division

Re: Senate Bill 40 – Vehicle Laws – Towed, Removed or Abandoned Vehicles – Electronic
Notice to Owner(SUPPORT)

The Consumer Protection Division of the Office of the Attorney General submits the following written testimony in support of Senate Bill 40 submitted by Senator C. Anthony Muse. This bill would permit a tower and the police department to notify, by electronic notice, an owner, the insurer of record, and any secured party of the action taken against the vehicle.

When a vehicle is towed, the owner, if he is aware his vehicle is missing, is often left confused, believing that his vehicle may have been stolen. The law, as currently written requires notice by certified mail within 7 days of the tow. When an individual believes his vehicle has been stolen, however, this is a lengthy period of time. This law permits electronic notification to the owner and the secured party as well as the insurer of record, which will likely result in a quicker ability for an individual to know what has occurred and be able to take appropriate action. If no response is received within 7 days, then notice must still be sent by certified mail. This law therefore adds protections, without removing any protections currently in the law in the event that electronic notice is not sufficient to notify the parties.

This bill will also help to potentially reduce storage charges imposed upon the owner. The Consumer Protection Division often receives complaints from individuals about the costs incurred in having their vehicle towed, including storage charges. By providing an option for more rapid notification, the owner can act to retrieve the vehicle sooner, resulting in less fines to consumers.

For these reasons, we ask that the Judicial Proceedings Committee return a favorable report on this bill.

cc: The Honorable C. Anthony Muse
Members, Judicial Proceedings Committee