

March 5, 2025

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

Re: Letter of Information – Senate Bill 761 – Motor Vehicles – Installment Payment Plans – Automated Enforcement

Dear Chair Smith and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) takes no position on Senate Bill 761 and offers the following information and amendments for the Committee's consideration.

SB 761 authorizes civil penalties issued under automated traffic enforcement (AE) programs be included in installment payment plan agreements with the clerk of the court.

The State Highway Administration (SHA) understands the desire to create a mechanism by which an individual may fulfill their duty to the State without creating an undue burden; however, SHA recommends clarification that the act of establishing a new AE payment plan does not release a flag on the driver's account with the Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA) for a previously defaulted payment plan. It is the MDOT's understanding of SB 761 that any defaulted payment plan would be referred to the Central Collections Unit (CCU). This would automatically trigger a flag for that debt with the MVA on the vehicle account. A flag should stay on the account until full payment is received on the CCU debt regardless of any subsequent payment plans for any new AE debt incurred.

MVA uses flags to prevent drivers from renewing a vehicle registration, getting a substitute license plate, transferring license plates, or obtaining duplicate registration cards. If the account flag for a prior AE payment plan that was defaulted on and referred to CCU is released at the time a new payment plan is established, there is little incentive to complete full payment until years later at renewal.

Finally, SHA notes that payment plans may represent an administrative burden to MVA, CCU, SHA, and the district court. Additional contractual and administrative costs may be required to manage partial payments on primarily low dollar accounts, with no added cost recovery benefits. Cost recovery through a reasonable fee for the payment plan is appropriate to counteract this impact.

The Maryland Department of Transportation respectfully requests the Committee consider this information as it deliberates on Senate Bill 761.

Respectfully submitted,

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