

SB0322 - MDTA - LOS - Obscured or Modified Registr

Uploaded by: Matt Mickler

Position: FAV

January 28, 2025

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

***RE: Letter of Support – Senate Bill 322 – Vehicle Laws – Obscured or Modified
Registration Plates***

Dear Chair Smith and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) supports Senate Bill 322 and offers the following information for the Committee’s consideration.

SB 322 prohibits a person from obscuring or modifying any vehicle registration plate in a manner that may prevent identification. The bill would alter the “intent” portion of the law. The act of obscuring or modifying a vehicle registration plate is a moving violation regardless of a person’s intent to obscure or modify the plate. With respect to the operations of the MDTA’s *E-ZPass* 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. The ability to capture license plate details accurately and reliably allows MDTA to price transactions electronically for all road users. For motorists who opt not to open an electronic tolling account and use an on-board transponder (*E-ZPass*), license plate images (i.e., video tolls, Pay-By-Plate) are a means to charge drivers by capturing a license plate image, identifying the vehicle owner, and billing the owner for the toll charge.

The MDTA’s tolling vendor reported 388,295 and 380,491 obstructed license plates in calendar years 2022 and 2023, respectively. For perspective, if the proposed legislation was effective in deterring this behavior, the MDTA would have collected approximately \$2 million in additional revenue in calendar year 2023 (assuming a \$6.16 average toll and an 84% collection rate). The bill helps to ensure that all Maryland motorists traversing State roads pay their fair share.

For these reasons, the Maryland Department of Transportation respectfully requests the Committee issue Senate Bill 322 a favorable report.

Respectfully submitted,

Bradley Ryon
Manager, Government Relations
Maryland Transportation Authority
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Matt Mickler
Director of Government Affairs
Maryland Department of Transportation
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SB 322 - Vehicle Laws - Obscured or Modified Regis

Uploaded by: Michael McMillan

Position: FAV

Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1300

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Proudly representing the transit workers of the MTA!



SB 322 - Vehicle Laws - Obscured or Modified Registration Plates

Favorable

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

January 28th, 2025

ATU Local 1300 represents over 3,000 transit workers at the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA). This includes bus operators, bus mechanics, rail operators, rail maintenance workers, and more. Our members keep Maryland moving every day.

SB 322 is a commonsense proposal to fix the broken enforcement system for obscured registration plates. People obscure their registration plates for a variety of reasons, but almost all of these offenses include the element of avoiding paying for transportation services as they should. A cottage industry of registration plate modifications and techniques have grown over the last few years as traffic cameras and automated toll enforcement rose in prominence.

It is essential that the public understands intent to avoid identification is not the issue, the issue is avoiding paying for their fair share of transportation infrastructure or reckless driving behavior.

We urge the committee to issue a favorable report on SB 322.

SB 322 - MSAA Favorable.pdf

Uploaded by: Patrick Gilbert

Position: FAV



Maryland State's Attorneys' Association

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Rich Gibson
President

Steven I. Kroll
Coordinator

DATE: **January 24, 2025**

BILL NUMBER: **SB 322**

POSITION: **Favorable**

The Maryland State's Attorneys' Association (MSAA) supports Senate Bill 322 and urges this Committee to issue a favorable report.

From traffic safety to toll collection, parking regulation to fraud prevention, the State of Maryland has an interest in ensuring that a vehicle's registration plate is legible and unobstructed and, consequently, in discouraging people from obscuring the legibility of their registration plate.

Currently, MD. CODE ANN., TRANSP. § 21-1112.1 prohibits the obscuring or modifying of a registration plate with the intent to avoid identification. SB 322 make a minor change to the intent requirement of this statute – from prohibiting conduct undertaken “with intent to avoid identification” to prohibiting conduct undertaken “in a manner that may prevent identification – that will better aim the statute at the conduct it is trying to discourage. Maryland needs registration plates to be visible and unobscured, and by prohibiting persons from modifying their registration plate in a manner that renders them difficult to identify, regardless of their intent in making such modification, SB 322 better serves the interests that animated the statute in the first place. MSAA urges this Committee to issue a favorable report on SB 322.

MCPA-MSA_SB 322 - OBSCURED or MODIFIED REGISTRATIO

Uploaded by: Samira Jackson

Position: FAV



Maryland Chiefs of Police Association

Maryland Sheriffs' Association



MEMORANDUM

TO: William C. Smith, Jr., Chair and
Members of the Judicial Proceedings 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: January 28, 2025

RE: **SB 322 OBSCURED OR MODIFIED REGISTRATION PLATES**

POSITION: **SUPPORT**

The Maryland Chiefs of Police Association (MCPA) and the Maryland Sheriffs' Association (MSA) **SUPPORT SB 322**. 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 SB 322, 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 SB 322** and urge a **FAVORABLE** committee report.

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Testimony - License Plates.pdf

Uploaded by: Sen. Cheryl Kagan

Position: FAV

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Joint Audit and Evaluation Committee
Joint Committee on Federal Relations

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

SB322: Modified License Plates
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
Tuesday, January 28, 2025 1:00 PM

Defaced license plates can make vehicles nearly undetectable, even to enforcement technology. Although tinted license plate covers were outlawed in 1995 in my very first bill ([Md. Code, Transp. §13-411.1](#)), the problem of illegible plates has escalated. This issue poses significant challenges in:

- Identifying red light violators;
- Effectively utilizing speed cameras;
- Solving hit-and-run accidents;
- Tracking down gas station pump-and-run perpetrators;
- Finding suspects with outstanding warrants;
- Locating missing persons through Amber & Silver Alerts; and
- Charging tolls for those without an E-ZPass.

This issue not only compromises safety but also diverts revenue. The Maryland Transportation Authority (MDTA) estimates that over \$1.5 million was lost in toll revenue annually from 388,295 obstructed plates in 2022 and 380,491 in 2023.

In 2024, I sponsored [SB10](#) with the intent of instituting penalties for obscuring license plates and implementing a replacement program to address naturally deteriorating license plates.

This year's [SB322](#)-- in consultation with MDTA-- allows law enforcement the discretion to issue warnings or citations, rather than requiring a penalty based on the number of offenses. The license plate replacement program was also removed, as the Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA) has begun a similar effort. This bill simply prohibits a person from obscuring or modifying a vehicle registration plate in a manner that may prevent identification, whereas current law prohibits such actions only if done with intent to avoid identification.

Twenty-four other states ([AZ](#), [CA](#), [FL](#), [GA](#), [IL](#), [IN](#), [LA](#), [MI](#), [MN](#), [MS](#), [NE](#), [NV](#), [NH](#), [NJ](#), [NY](#), [NC](#), [ND](#), [PA](#), [SC](#), [SD](#), [TX](#), [UT](#), [WA](#), & [WV](#)) have enacted similar legislation.

I urge a favorable report on SB322.