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Government, Labor, and Elections
Committee

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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony in Support of HB HB 68
Old Line Plate Program Act of 2026

Testimony by Delegate Vaughn Stewart
February 5, 2026 | Environment & Transportation

Introduction

HB 68 is a simple, voluntary, and market-driven proposal that allows Maryland to raise dedicated transportation revenue while celebrating the state's history—without raising taxes, imposing new mandatory fees, or undermining existing specialty plate programs.

What HB 68 Does

HB 68 creates a new optional specialty license plate—the **Old Line Plate**—modeled after Maryland's early 20th-century license plates, featuring a black background with white lettering.

The program is administered by the Motor Vehicle Administration and operates through a limited public auction system. Rather than issuing plates on a first-come, first-served basis, a fixed number of Old Line plate numbers will be made available through periodic auctions, with numbers awarded to the highest bidders.

Importantly, the State retains ownership of the plates and the plate numbers. What is auctioned is a revocable registration number right, not private property. This structure preserves state control, prevents speculation or secondary markets, and allows the MVA to maintain program integrity over time.

Fees collected—after covering administrative costs—are deposited into the Transportation Trust Fund.

The bill also includes explicit guardrails:

- The inventory of Old Line plate numbers is capped
- No new plate numbers are created annually
- Numbers may only be reintroduced under defined conditions

As a result, the program does **not** compete with or dilute existing specialty plate programs, including the Agricultural and Chesapeake Bay Plates.

Why This Matters

Maryland's Transportation Trust Fund finances the backbone of our transportation system: roads, bridges, transit, safety improvements, and system maintenance. In recent years, the fund has faced persistent structural pressure, threatening the state's ability to keep pace with infrastructure needs and climate-resilient investments.

HB 68 provides a modest but meaningful revenue stream—entirely voluntary—that helps diversify transportation funding without shifting costs onto drivers who choose not to participate.

This approach works because it aligns incentives. Collectors, car enthusiasts, and drivers who value a distinctive, historic plate are willing to pay for exclusivity. The auction mechanism ensures that the plates are priced by demand, not by guesswork, and that the public—not speculators—captures that value.

At the same time, the bill respects existing specialty plate programs. Maryland's Agricultural and Bay Plates fund important public purposes and reflect core state values. HB 68 is designed to complement—not compete with—those programs, serving a different audience and preserving their funding streams.

Why a Favorable Report Is Warranted

HB 68 is fiscally responsible, administratively straightforward, and politically durable.

It raises transportation revenue without raising taxes. It creates no obligation for drivers who do not wish to participate. It preserves state control and program integrity. And it celebrates Maryland's heritage in a way that is likely to be publicly popular.

This is a rare policy proposal that combines practicality with pride of place—delivering value to the Transportation Trust Fund while giving Marylanders a plate they will actually want.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to issue a favorable report on House Bill 68.

Thank you.