
February 19, 2026

The Honorable Marc Korman
Chair, Environment and Transportation Committee
250 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Letter of Information – House Bill 777 – Motor Vehicles - Required Equipment - Rear Occupant Alert Systems (Hot Cars Act)

Dear Chair Korman and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Transportation takes no position on House Bill 777 but offers the following information for the Committee's consideration.

HB 777 would prohibit the Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA) from registering a motor vehicle of a certain model year or newer that does not have a rear occupant alert system that notifies a driver an occupant is in the rear seat after the vehicle is turned off. The requirement is contingent on a final rule being passed by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) establishing standards for such a system. The MVA must further develop verification that a vehicle has such a system installed or refuse to register it.

Federal standards set by law and/or NHTSA establish the requirements for manufacturers of motor vehicles and are responsible for modern innovations such as the three-point seat belt, air bags, rearview video systems, and electronic stability control among other features. The Maryland State Police oversee, regulate, and license all vehicle safety inspection stations in Maryland, both state-owned and private. All licensed inspection stations conduct vehicle safety inspections to confirm that required safety components and essential operating parts are installed and meet National Highway Traffic Safety Administration standards based on the vehicle's model year.

Among technology that is to be required of manufacturers by NHTSA is a rear occupant alert system that alerts a driver of a rear seat occupant when a vehicle is turned off. This new safety feature was required in the 2021 Bipartisan Infrastructure Law which mandated NHTSA to promulgate a rule by November 15, 2023, requiring such technology in new vehicles by manufacturers. Such safety warnings can help ensure a driver does not mistakenly leave a child or pet in a rear seat during warm weather months. A vehicle temperature can quickly escalate to over 100 degrees even on a mild temperature day, turning fatal as a result. Per the National Safety Council, two Maryland children have tragically died in 2025 from heat related causes after being left in unattended vehicles in 2025, the first reported deaths from this tragic occurrence since 2015 when two children also died from heat inside unattended vehicles.

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The MVA supports all action to prevent these tragedies from occurring, however NHTSA regulations apply to all vehicle manufacturers producing in or importing vehicles to the United States. Thus HB 777 would be duplicative as no vehicles could be manufactured and sold in the United States, including Maryland, that do not meet NHTSA safety standards.

The Maryland Department of Transportation respectfully requests the committee consider this information during its deliberation of House Bill 777.

Respectfully submitted,

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