

## Environment and Transportation Committee

02/17/2026

Good afternoon, Chairman Korman, Vice-Chair Guyton, Delegate Patterson, and members of the Environment and Transportation Committee. My name is George Clark, and I am here as a life-long resident of Maryland, and for the record, I serve as the Transportation Director for the Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland. I am here today to testify in strong support of House Bill 0474, the 'Clear Before You Drive Act'.

In Southern Maryland, our commuters rely on high-speed regional arteries where “ice missiles” - large sheets of ice flying off uncleared vehicles - pose a severe and often unpredictable threat. HB 0474 addresses a critical gap in our vehicle laws by requiring drivers to remove snow and ice from exposed surfaces, including hoods, roofs, and trailers, before driving on the road.

We have had 3 serious crashes from the snow/ice storm this year: one in Anne Arundel County (involving a Police Officer), one in Harford County, and one in St Mary's County, and many more I am sure that go unreported. There is no information on the crash report database that clearly addresses serious injury/fatal/property damage due to ice/snow falling off one vehicle and hitting another, kept by MDOT/MVA Highway Safety Office.

This legislation is balanced and fair. It classifies the simple failure to clear a vehicle as a secondary offense. This ensures that the primary focus is on public education and voluntary compliance rather than unnecessary traffic stops. However, it rightly shifts to primary enforcement when negligence leads to real-world harm.

Critically, this bill establishes significant penalties when a failure to clear a vehicle contributes to accidents resulting in property damage, serious injury, or death:

Noncommercial Vehicles: Fines between \$200 and \$1,000.

Commercial Vehicles: Fines are between \$500 and \$1,500.

As a transportation official, I believe these tiered fines for commercial and noncommercial operators reflect the varying levels of risk these vehicles pose to the traveling public.

In closing, I would state that public safety on our highways should not be left to chance during winter weather. By enacting this standard, we protect Maryland drivers from preventable tragedies. On behalf of the Tri-County Council of Southern Maryland, I urge a favorable report on HB 0474. Thank you for allowing me to speak on behalf of this important legislation.

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