

In Favor of 0646

Submitted by Donna Berry

I am strongly in favor of this bill. My experience renewing my license indicates that the existing process of dealing with **self-reported issues** is arbitrary and not necessarily based on sound medical knowledge. A driver's personal doctor is in a better position to know their cognitive, visual and physical capabilities to be safe on the road.

When I last renewed my driver's license, I had to answer new questions. Instead of asking about specific conditions, the MVA now asks a more general one about whether you have any condition that impacts your arms/legs. I have a peripheral neuropathy called Charcot Marie Tooth. My peripheral nerves stop functioning so that the associated muscles atrophy. I realized that honesty required me to answer yes. I considered not being honest because I knew it would create bureaucratic hassles. And, I have since learned of others who choose to lie for this very reason, which makes me wonder about the value of this whole effort.

The MVA sent paperwork for my doctor and me to complete. I don't remember the questions but know that my doctor said she had no concerns about my driving. This wasn't good enough for the agency. MVA decided I needed to complete the MADRS exam, which seemed to be primarily a visual and cognitive test. According to the person who administered it, usually it is required as a result of a police referral. Please note that my peripheral neuropathy in no way impacts my visual or cognitive capabilities.

I was also required to take a driving test. The 1<sup>st</sup> step is to back into a parking space, a maneuver that in 50 years of driving, I have never needed to do. I failed that and my license was immediately pulled. I was provided no information on what happened next. After 2 weeks, I received a letter saying I could take the test again. I knew I needed a driving lesson but quickly learned I couldn't take one because I didn't have a legal right to be on the road. MVA offered me a one-day permit which didn't make sense. I finally connected with Del. Korman's office who arranged for me to get a learner's permit. I received the permit on a Wednesday, took the lesson on Friday and passed the driving test the following Monday. 6 long weeks later I had my license back.

I was lucky. I am retired and didn't have too many places to be, and had a spouse and others who could drive me places. But I kept thinking about the impact on someone who didn't have these advantages. About someone who relies on driving to get to work and doesn't have the extra cash to pay for Uber/Lyft/taxis. And then I wonder how denying a license to an experienced driver because they couldn't do an optional maneuver makes Maryland streets safer. This all seems especially onerous when remembering that experienced drivers new to the State simply hand in their existing license and automatically receive their Maryland one.

When asked, MVA provided no concrete criteria on how the decision is made to require additional evaluation. Rather, these decisions are made on a “case-by-case basis depending on their individual case parameters.” Similarly, a decision was made recently to always accept a doctor’s recommendation with respect to sleep apnea patients but again, when asked, no justification for this decision was provided. Finally, it turns out that the MVA doesn’t track the results of requiring additional testing for self-reported issues when the doctor is comfortable; whether these extra steps result in either restrictions or license revocation. Thus, we don’t know whether these extra efforts do indeed make our roads safer.