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Written Testimony on HB1338

Position: Favorable

Before the House Environment & Transportation Committee

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Submitted by:

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Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Members of the Committee:

I write in my capacity as Program Director of the Vocational Training Center at NCIA, a Maryland nonprofit that has served individuals with limited access to opportunity for more than 48 years.

Each day, we work with Marylanders seeking a second chance. Our students are adults, many from Baltimore City and surrounding communities, who commit themselves to education, workforce training, and personal responsibility. They complete rigorous instruction in CDL, HVAC, and Automotive Technology. They earn industry recognized certifications, pass background checks, and successfully complete their Motor Vehicle Administration road tests.

Too often, their progress is halted not by lack of skill or discipline, but by the designation of Provisional License. HB1338 offers practical and balanced reform. It aligns Maryland's licensing structure with workforce realities while preserving strong safety standards. Maryland remains an outlier in requiring all first-time drivers, regardless of age, to hold a provisional license for 18 months. This bill corrects that for adults while keeping graduated licensing protections for teens fully intact.

The graduated licensing reforms adopted in 1998 were grounded in legitimate public safety concerns. Research consistently shows that structured graduated systems reduce crash risk among 16 and 17 year old drivers. The heightened risk among teens justified those safeguards. However, a framework designed to address adolescent risk now has unintended consequences when applied uniformly to adults.

Under current law, an adult who completes classroom instruction, behind the wheel training, supervised driving requirements, and passes the road test must still wait 18 months before obtaining a full, unrestricted license.

In the past year, our center documented 25 graduates denied employment solely because they held a provisional license. Employers in HVAC, automotive services, logistics, public works, and transportation frequently require a full license due to insurance

standards. These employers view our graduates as qualified and ready to contribute. Yet insurance carriers will not approve of a provisional driver.

For adults who have done everything required of them, this results in an 18-month delay in employment. The individuals we serve include low-income adults, people returning from incarceration, and residents who previously relied on public transportation. For them, 18 months is not a technical delay. It is lost wages, delayed stability, and stalled momentum toward self-sufficiency. Many support children and families. They are striving to rebuild their lives with dignity. They are not asking for shortcuts, only for a fair pathway forward.

This legislation does not weaken safety standards. Adults must still complete driver education, supervised practice, and road testing. Enforcement of penalties remains in place. Teen protection remains unchanged. The bill simply recognizes differences in age and risk profile.

At NCIA, we train approximately 250 individuals each year. Our graduates secure employment between 18 and 30 dollars per hour, often higher in skilled trades. In the Baltimore, Columbia, and Towson region, hundreds of HVAC and CDL positions are currently available. Jobs exist. The workforce is prepared. The barrier is not competency; it is duration.

HB1338 addresses that central barrier by removing the mandatory 18-month provisional period for adults who have satisfied all requirements. It preserves safety, maintains standards, and restores opportunity. We remain open to continued dialogue regarding access to driver education, affordability, and implementation. However, this bill takes a meaningful and measured step toward ensuring that safety policy does not unintentionally disenfranchise those working hardest to improve their lives.

As Program Director, I have seen how a single policy detail can determine whether a parent secures employment or remains on the margins. The adults we serve have met every obligation placed before them. They are ready to work, ready to provide, and ready to contribute to Maryland's economy.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge a favorable report on HB1338. Thank you for your leadership and your continued commitment to policies that protect the public while expanding opportunity for Maryland's most vulnerable residents.

Respectfully submitted,

Eric C. Brown