

Dear Chair Korman, Vice-Chair Guyton, and Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee:

While I serve as the Student Member on the Maryland State Board of Education, my testimony today is offered in my personal capacity, not on behalf of the board.

I appear before you to respectfully urge a favorable report on HB0123, of which I am the originator. When I initially reached out to Delegate Jamilla Woods last session, I was facing a significant obstacle. A few months prior, I had visited my local branch of the Motor Vehicle Administration, accompanied by my Great-Grandmother, who, following my mother's departure in my early infancy, assumed the role of my primary caregiver.

Although present in my life, my father never formally acknowledged paternity on my birth certificate, a circumstance beyond my control. Furthermore, approximately five years ago, he relocated 50 miles from my residence to Leonardtown, Maryland.

These circumstances do not reflect a lack of character or judgment; rather, they represent situations that affect thousands of Maryland youth residing in non-traditional or kinship care households. Nevertheless, my Great-Grandmother and I were denied service at the MVA. Current regulations mandate the physical presence of a BIOLOGICAL PARENT at the time of application for an Identification Card. Additionally, without my father's name on the birth certificate, which that parent is also required to furnish, I was unable to obtain identification absent legislative intervention.

Indeed, intervention became necessary. The MVA demonstrated a lack of commitment to equity by granting my identification only as a "favor" to my Delegate. I implore you to ensure that access to identification is not a privilege, but an accessible right. That same summer, my father tragically passed away as a result of an unforeseen accident. Consequently, had Delegate Woods not intervened, it would have been physically impossible for me to obtain an ID until my eighteenth birthday, a critical juncture that would have prevented me from traveling, securing employment, or exercising my right to vote.

HB0123 would eliminate these obstacles by prohibiting the MVA from imposing the current requirement, while simultaneously maintaining rigorous standards for the verification of identity and citizenship, including:

- Proof of Age
- Social Security Verification
- Two Proofs of Residency

For these reasons, I urge you to take decisive action on behalf of the youth you represent by voting in favor of HB0023.

With Respect,
O'Marie Barnes