

MDCC_SB 352_Favorable - Post Crossover.pdf

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Position: FAV



Senate Bill 352

Position: Favorable

Committee: Environment and Transportation

Date: March 31, 2026

Founded in 1968, the Maryland Chamber of Commerce (“Maryland Chamber”) is a statewide coalition of more than 7,000 members working to develop and promote strong public policy that ensures sustained economic growth and opportunity for all Marylanders.

As amended, Senate Bill 352 (SB 352) represents an innovative and forward-thinking approach to modernizing Maryland’s vehicle registration system while creating new opportunities for revenue generation. By establishing a structured program for historic-style, low-number license plates, the bill taps into a proven market of collectors and enthusiasts who place high value on unique registration numbers. **Similar license plates programs have proven to generate revenue in states like Maryland and Delaware.**

The bill’s provision allowing the Motor Vehicle Administration to auction desirable plate numbers provides a voluntary, market-based mechanism to raise funds that can be reinvested into transportation priorities without increasing taxes or fees on the broader public. This aligns with fiscally responsible governance and efficient resource allocation. **For these reasons, the Maryland Chamber respectfully requests a favorable report on SB 352.**

SB 352 - CBF - FAV - E&T.pdf

Uploaded by: Matt Stegman

Position: FAV



CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

Senate Bill 352 Motor Vehicles - Special Registration Plates - Old Line Plates (Old Line License Plate Program Act of 2026)

Date: March 31, 2026
To: Environment & Transportation Committee

Position: **FAVORABLE**
From: Matt Stegman,
MD Staff Attorney

The Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) **SUPPORTS Senate Bil 352**, as passed out of the Senate. The bill creates an “Old Line” specialty license plate category to be administered by MDOT MVA. In its current posture, the bill directs a portion of funds generated by the new plate to the Chesapeake Bay Trust (CBT). This will limit the impact the new program may have on sales of the Chesapeake Bay plate, revenue from which is used by CBT to fund restoration projects throughout the Bay watershed.

CBF urges the Committee’s FAVORABLE report on SB 352.

For more information, please contact Matt Stegman, Maryland Staff Attorney, at mstegman@cbf.org.

Maryland Office • Philip Merrill Environmental Center • 6 Herndon Avenue • Annapolis • Maryland • 21403

The Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) is a non-profit environmental education and advocacy organization dedicated to the restoration and protection of the Chesapeake Bay. With over 200,000 members and e-subscribers, including 71,000 in Maryland alone, CBF works to educate the public and to protect the interest of the Chesapeake and its resources.

Ches Bay Trust-MAEF Testimony - SB352-house.pdf

Uploaded by: Jana Davis

Position: INFO



Senate Bill 352 Old Line Plate Written Testimony

Date: March 31, 2026

For Information

Submitted to: House Environment and Transportation Committee

Submitted by: Chesapeake Bay Trust and the Maryland Agricultural Education Foundation

Maryland has two specialty license plate tags, the “ag tag” and the “bay plate.” The revenue from the ag tag is managed by the Maryland Agricultural Education Foundation (MAEF), a nonprofit dedicated to increasing [agricultural literacy](#) with programs serving pre-kindergarten through post-secondary audience. The revenue from the bay plate is [distributed to hundreds of community-based not-for-profit entities as determined via a thorough, peer review-based vetting process](#) (Fig. 1) by the legislatively created Chesapeake Bay Trust. The Trust serves as the legislature’s natural resources community-based grant-maker, carefully determining where dollars should be invested. The Trust was intentionally not created with an operating appropriation, instead using resources from the bay plate (and a tax checkoff) for both the grants it distributes and operating expenses, with on average 92 cents of every dollar going to programs (an exceptionally high proportion as per Charity Navigator).

Numbers of ag tags and bay plates sold per year have remained relatively constant since 2010, maintained with active marketing programs. The plate revenue is the backbone of both organizations’ larger revenue streams. For example, the Trust leverages plate revenue to attract \$20-30 million more from other sources to be [distributed to and sustain nonprofits around the region](#).

The Nature of License Plate Revenue

As many members of the committee know, the Trust and MAEF together follow the license plate picture in Maryland each year. Because there is a finite number of registered vehicles, and therefore a finite number of potential bay/ag-tag purchasers, there is a finite number of bay/ag tags to be sold. Data from other states show that only about 7-10% of car owners will spend additional money for a specialty license plate (Figure 2 below), [driven, as we know from public opinion polling, mainly by aesthetics](#). Maryland is at about 10% saturation level now. Therefore, new license plate specialty options are not likely to lead to an increased number of people choosing them.

This Bill: SB 352

It is our understanding that the Old Line Plate is intended to be administered in small quantities (which drives the high demand which, in turn, commands a higher dollar at auction) for a finite period of time. We therefore appreciate the Senate amendment that limits the number of Old Line Plates that can be produced to 999 (three numeric digits.) As a result of this amendment, the negative impact on the bay plate and the ag tag would be minimal. (Though not zero: By definition, if a vehicle owner purchases an Old Line plate, he/she/they cannot also purchase a ag/bay tag, and some ag/bay tag owners will trade their tags in for Old Line plates).

Figure 1: Funds from license plates are distributed to hundreds of carefully vetted not-for-profit organizations (e.g., homeowners associations, community development organizations, teachers and schools, faith-based organizations, local governments, nonprofits) annually. Each dot below represents an individual or cluster of community-led projects that can be explored via the [interactive map here](#). (Non-Maryland projects are supported with other funds.)

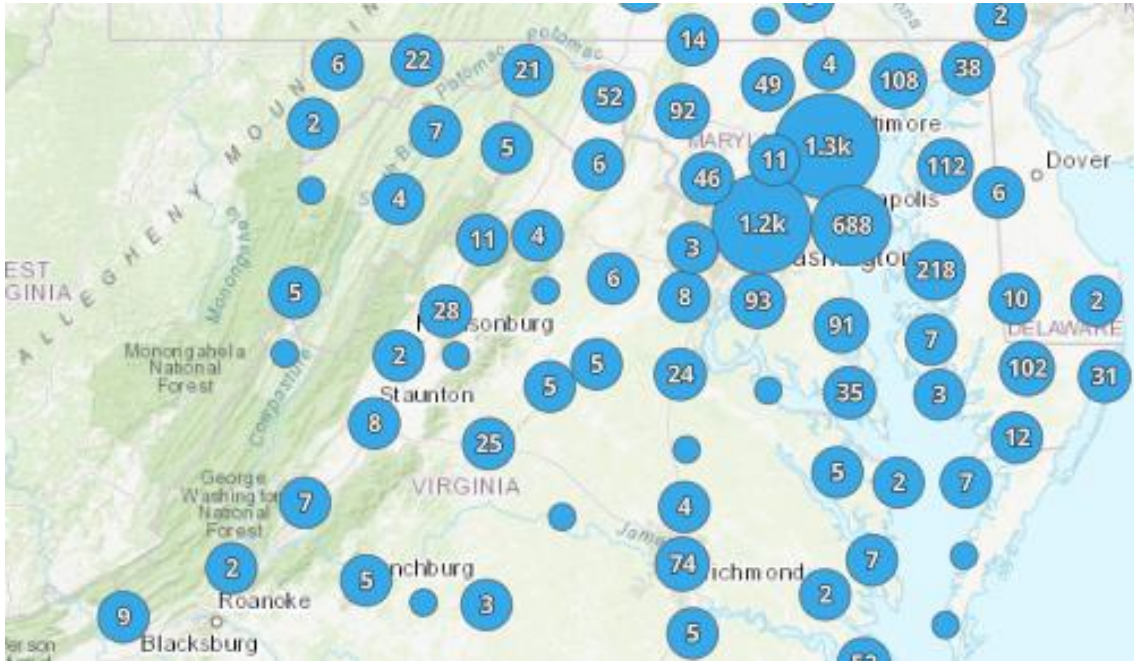


Figure 2: Market saturation of background scene/specialty license plates occurs at about 7-8% of the vehicle owners

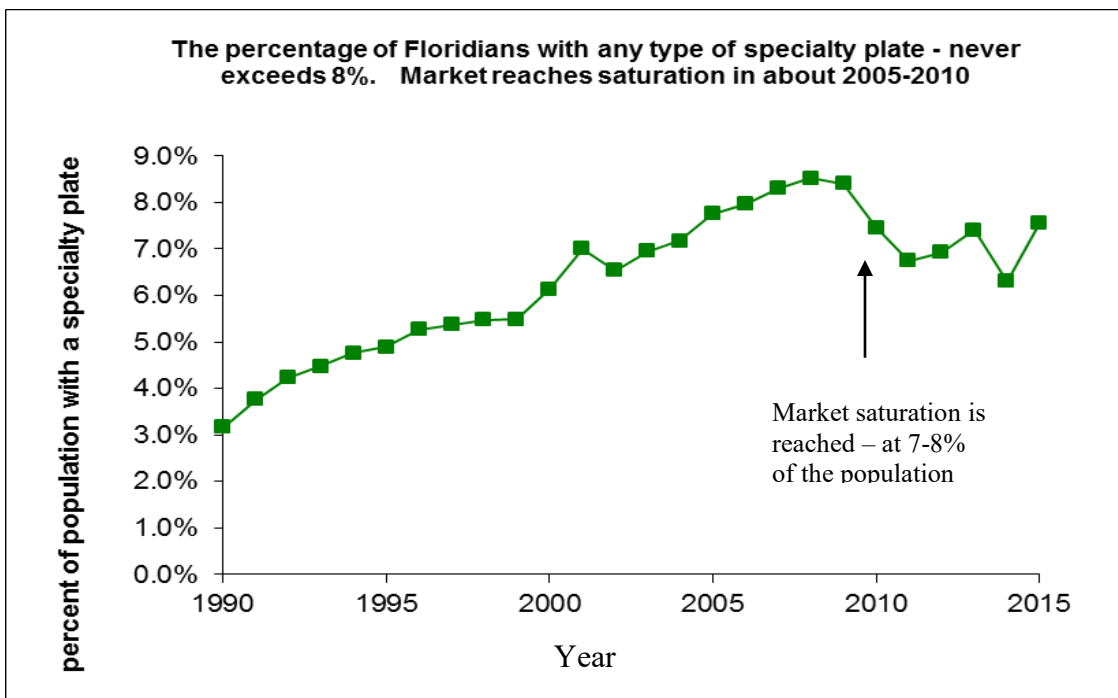


Figure 3a: Examples of decreases in specialty license plate revenue with increasing #s of additional plates: Blue line shows the # of plate options for vehicle owners, and the pink lines are the revenue generated by the plate (e.g., the # of people who buy them.)

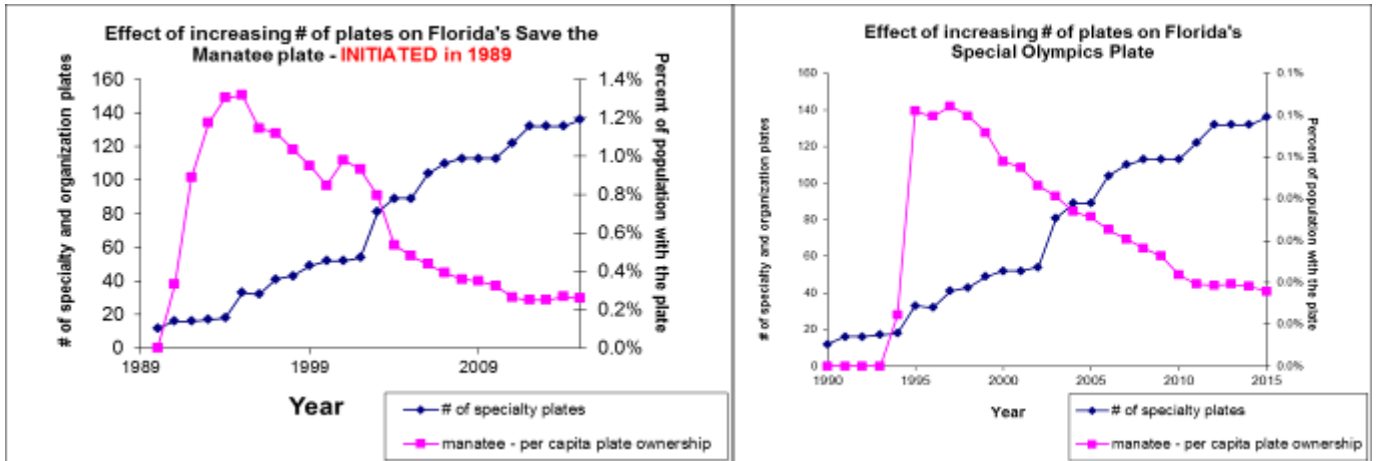
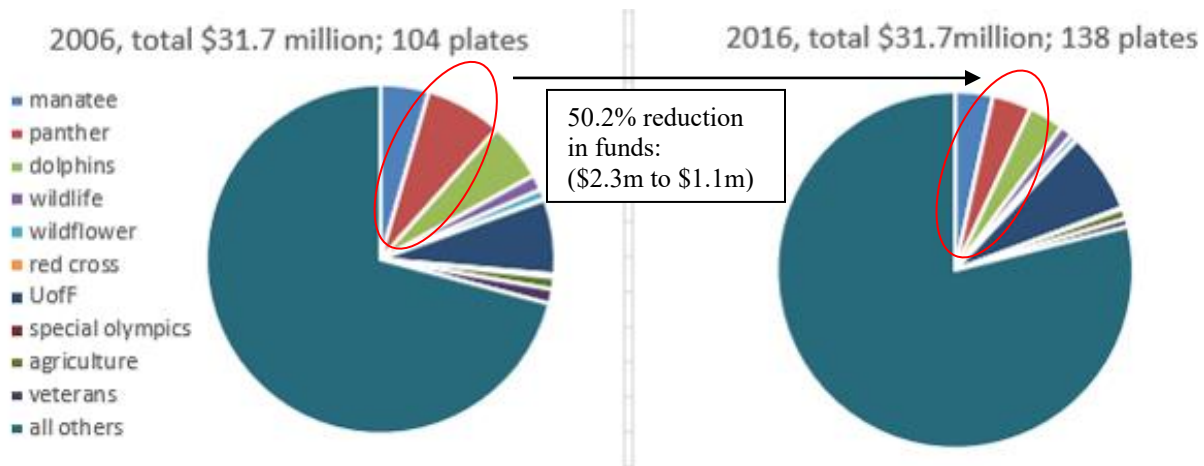


Figure 3b: The “Pie Problem:” In 2006 and 2016, Floridians spent the same total amount on specialty license plates, despite more options in 2016. The plates that existed in 2006 all had lower revenues (smaller pieces of the pie) in 2016. E.g., the panther plate generated \$2.3m in 2006 then dropped to \$1.1m with more plate options in 2016 (red pie slices below)



About the Chesapeake Bay Trust

The Trust was created by the Maryland General Assembly in 1985 as a nonprofit grant-making organization with a goal to empower community-based groups to play a role in the restoration of the state's local rivers, streams, parks, and other natural resources in diverse communities across the state, from the mountains of Western Maryland and the Youghiogheny watershed to the marshes of the Coastal Bays. The goal was to create an entity that complements state agency work by empowering groups on the ground: schools, nonprofit organizations, faith-based and reach large institutions, homeowners associations, community and civic associations, and other types of groups.



The Trust is known for its efficiency, putting more than 90 cents of every dollar into programs. The Trust has awarded close to \$200m through 13,000 grants and projects in every county in Maryland since 1985. We now average about 500 grants and other awards a year and have about 1,000 active awardees at a time.



Due to its efficiency, the Trust has been rated with the maximum four-star rating by the nation's leading charity evaluator, Charity Navigator, for more than two decades, putting it in the top 1% of non-profits in the nation.



One of the Trust's basic tenets in its strategic plan is to engage under-engaged audiences in natural resources issues. Every individual in our area benefits from healthy natural resources, and in turn, every individual can help natural resources.

About the Maryland Agricultural Education Foundation

Dedicated to increasing agricultural literacy and agricultural education, the Maryland Agricultural Education Foundation (MAEF) is a nonprofit organization with programs serving pre-kindergarten through post-secondary audiences. MAEF signature programs include mobile science labs; mobile agricultural showcases; professional development courses for teachers and Maryland FFA.

Agriculture plays a critical role in our lives, providing elements that are essential to life while at the same time supporting Maryland's economy, environment and quality of life. It provides an engaging context for teaching science, social studies, life skills, mathematics, and language arts. Incorporating agriculture into teaching and learning creates the foundation that students, as future citizens, need to make educated decisions regarding food choices and nutrition, community issues, land use planning, and natural resource conservation.



MAEF works closely with the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and post-secondary partners to ensure that the next generation of agriculturalists and those in professions which support Maryland agriculture have opportunities to prepare for careers. With 50 agriculture programs in public schools across the state, MAEF provides support for agriculture teachers through professional development,

classroom support and curriculum training. MAEF's administration of Maryland FFA, with grant support from MSDE, empowers nearly 3,000 members to grow as leaders, learners and advocates for agriculture, the environment and natural resources in Maryland. Through hands-on experiences, competitions and leadership development, Maryland FFA equips young people with the confidence and skills they need to make a positive impact in their careers.

Agriculture plays a critical role in our lives. It provides an experiential teaching tool for the core curricula of science, social studies, life skills, mathematics, and language arts. Incorporating agriculture into teaching and learning creates the foundation that students, as future citizens, need to make educated decisions regarding food choices and nutrition, community issues, land use planning, and natural resource conservation.



The Maryland Agricultural Education Foundation, Inc. is a 501(c)3 non-profit, non-governmental organization established in 1989.

SB0352 - LOI – MVA - Special Registration Plates -

Uploaded by: Patricia Westervelt

Position: INFO

March 31, 2026

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

RE: Letter of Information – Senate Bill 352 – Motor Vehicles – Special Registration Plates – Old Line Plates (Old Line Plate Program Act of 2026)

Dear Chair Korman and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) takes no position on Senate Bill 352 but offers the following information for the Committee’s consideration.

SB 352 creates a new alternative registration plate called the “Old Line Plate” that is to be issued by the Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA) with the design based on the license plate issued to vehicles in 1911. The numeric only registration numbers, titled “Old Line Numbers,” are to be auctioned off to applicants, and the MVA is to issue a plate with those numbers to the “rights holder” of that number. The bill further details how license plates, once issued, can be transferred under limited circumstances or returned to the MVA along with other relevant administrative details.

Maryland’s current standard plate, the “Maryland Proud” design based on the State flag, uses an alpha-numeric code that is unique to each plate and printed in a clear font with an easy-to-read contrasting background using the Maryland state flag along the bottom of the plate, giving it a distinctive and easily recognizable design from other jurisdiction plates. This is in line with the standards for best practices as established by the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators (AAMVA)¹. These standards include a clearly identifiable plate that includes the jurisdiction along the top of the plate along with the use of unique alpha-numeric characters, fonts that are easy to read and provide a clear distinguishment for similar characters (i.e. O, Q, and 0), a background that does not interfere with the plate number, and is manufactured in such a manner that it allows for high-contrast recognition for infrared and visible light illumination in both daylight and nighttime conditions, including the ability to read it from distances of at least 75 feet.

When plates do not follow AAMVA standards, such as dark backgrounds that may reduce visibility or not using the prescribed alpha-numeric formatting, it can cause problems for automated plate reader (ALPRs) technology used by law enforcement and tolling authorities. These types of plates often require specific coding to be created in the software which increases

¹ AAMVA License Plate Standard, Edition 3, October 2023, Updated September 2025.

The Honorable Marc Korman
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the ability to read these plates by ALPRs, but at the expense of less accurate reading of plates that follow these practices.

The MVA has not previously conducted auctions for its license plates or for the assigned plate number. Doing so will require staff resources to identify the best means to conduct such an auction, establish a relationship with potential vendors should any be needed, and complete all of this and hold an auction by December 1, 2026. Such expenses would have to be recouped solely through the monies raised at auction as there are no additional fees for administering the unique costs for the Old Line Plate program unlike the annual fees assessed for other specialty plate programs offered by the MVA. These administrative impacts and costs to the MVA are in addition to working with its plate vendor to design and produce the plates. Maryland Correctional Enterprises, who produces license plates for the MVA, indicated in the fiscal note submitted for this proposal that the plates would be more than double the standard production costs of MVA specialty tags, averaging \$23.50 compared to the \$10 per set of specialty plates.

In addition to its standard flag tag design, the MVA currently offers agricultural and bay license plates, amateur radio operator license plates, 1910 vintage license plates, 138 military plates for qualified veterans, three kinds of disabled veterans' plates including an organization plate, 843 other organizational plates with a logo, and 69 organizational plates without logos for customers to choose from. In addition, customers can further customize plates with personalized alpha-numeric codes more commonly known as vanity plates, and eligible customers can obtain a disability plate. This is in addition to unique vehicle class plates such as motorcycle plates, fleet vehicles, apportioned, and other types of registration class plates and previous standard registration plates such as the War of 1812 that are still in use by customers. The MVA offers one of the broadest selections of registration plates to its customers in the country.

The Maryland Department of Transportation respectfully requests the committee consider this information during its deliberation of Senate Bill 352.

Respectfully submitted,

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