
January 21, 2026

The Honorable William C. Smith Jr.
Chair, Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: Letter of Support – Senate Bill 87 – Motor Vehicle Administration – Identification Cards, Licenses, and Permits – Repeal of Color Photograph Requirement

Dear Chair Smith and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) supports Senate Bill 87 as a beneficial cost-reduction measure by removing a duplicative, legacy product design requirement.

SB 87 removes the legal requirement that the Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA) print a color photo on the driver's license, identification card, or moped operator's permit. Current Maryland products have three identical photos including a large, high-resolution black and white photo and changeable laser image photo on the front, and the color photo on the back of each card.

In 2016, the State of Maryland identification products were redesigned to meet the highest card design standards, including a black and white photo on the front of the license, permit, or ID. A small color photo was added to the back of the product as a clear visual reference and identity comparison point for law enforcement. This was particularly useful before barcode scanners and mobile verification devices were widely available. However, the security and fraud protection benefits of a color photo are largely diminished with the use of modern embedded security layers. The proposed legislation eliminates this obsolete requirement as law enforcement in the State has come to agree it is no longer necessary for safety nor aligned with national best practices.

Removing the color photo requirement will produce immediate operational and fiscal benefits. Double-sided color printing significantly increases production time, equipment maintenance, and material expenses. Eliminating the back photo reduces printing errors, shortens production time, and lowers overall card issuance costs – efficiencies that directly benefit both Maryland residents and the State budget. Currently, the MVA spends approximately \$200,000 annually on product printing. Roughly 50%, or around \$100,000, of that cost is spent on the color ink cartridges to print the color photo on the back of the product. Eliminating that cost would halve production costs for the MVA each year.

The back color photo provides no modern security advantage. Federal REAL ID standards and American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrator guidelines do not mandate the second

The Honorable William C. Smith Jr.
Page Two

photo and the standard license for most states include only one visible photo. The front image already fulfills all necessary law-enforcement and identity-verification functions. Removing the redundant back photo allows for the reallocation of resources toward more effective, contemporary anti-counterfeiting measures, improvements to card durability, and future technological enhancements. Reducing unnecessary ink and ribbon usage also contributes to the State's environmental sustainability goals.

For these reasons, the Maryland Department of Transportation respectfully requests the Committee grant Senate Bill 87 a favorable report.

Respectfully submitted,

Christine E. Nizer
Administrator
Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration
410-787-7830

Matthew Mickler
Director of Government Affairs
Maryland Department of Transportation
410-865-1102