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Youth In Transition School

**Written Testimony on SB0856 / HB1338
Position: Favorable
Before the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
March 4, 2026**

Submitted by:
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Baltimore, MD

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

The National Center on Institutions and Alternatives (NCIA) respectfully submits this testimony in support of SB0856.

I Organizational Standing and Basis for Legislative Request

NCIA is a Maryland-based nonprofit organization that has served individuals with limited access to opportunity for over 48 years. NCIA operates the Vocational Training Center (VTC) in Baltimore City, which prepares adults for employment in high-demand skilled trades including Commercial Driver's License (CDL), HVAC, Automotive Technology, and other workforce certification programs.

NCIA trains approximately 250 individuals annually. Graduates routinely secure employment paying between \$18 and \$30 per hour.

Over the past several years, NCIA identified a recurring employment barrier affecting adults who had:

- Completed driver education,
- Satisfied required supervised driving hours, and
- Successfully passed the Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA) road test,

yet were unable to secure employment because they held provisional licenses rather than full, unrestricted licenses.

Employers in HVAC, automotive services, logistics, and commercial transportation frequently require a full driver's license due to insurance underwriting standards. Adults who have completed all statutory licensing requirements may nonetheless experience up to an 18-month delay before qualifying for full licensure.

In the past 12 months, NCIA documented 25 graduates denied employment solely due to provisional license status. After identifying this pattern, NCIA requested legislative review of whether the current 18-month provisional duration, as applied to adults, remains necessary to preserve public safety while balancing workforce access.

SB0856 reflects that review.

II Statutory Background

In 1998, the Maryland General Assembly enacted comprehensive graduated licensing reforms through House Bill 527 (Chapter 483), establishing a provisional driver's license within the Maryland Vehicle Law.¹

Under current law, all first-time drivers—regardless of age—must hold a provisional license for 18 months before receiving a full, unrestricted license.²

The provisional requirement applies even after an applicant completes driver's education and passes the required road test.

SB0856 does not eliminate the provisional license category. It addresses the duration of provisional status as applied to adults who have completed all statutory competency requirements.

III Safety Research Context

Graduated driver licensing ("GDL") systems are supported by substantial empirical research with respect to adolescent drivers. The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety ("IIHS") and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration ("NHTSA") have consistently found that structured GDL systems reduce crash risk among 16- and 17-year-old drivers.³

Teen drivers experience significantly higher crash rates per mile traveled than older drivers.⁴ For this reason, GDL systems nationwide were developed primarily to address elevated adolescent crash risk.

SB0856 does not alter Maryland's graduated licensing protections for teen drivers.

Research concerning adult novice drivers is more nuanced. While novice status is associated with elevated crash risk compared to that of experienced drivers, the magnitude of the risk differs by age.⁵ Available literature does not clearly establish that a specific 18-month provisional duration uniquely improves safety outcomes for adult drivers as compared to shorter or teen-focused models used in other jurisdictions.

IV Maryland Safety Data

Maryland reported a decline in traffic fatalities in 2025, from 582 in 2024 to 480.⁶ State reporting attributes the decline to enforcement initiatives, impaired driving prevention efforts, and infrastructure and pedestrian safety improvements.⁷

The provisional licensing structure remained unchanged during this period. For the most recent full year of comparable data, Maryland's fatality rate was approximately 1.08 deaths per 100 million vehicle miles traveled (VMT), compared to a national rate of approximately 1.26 per 100 million VMT.⁸

Over the past decade, Maryland's traffic fatalities increased approximately 31 percent, compared to approximately 20 percent nationally.⁹

These data do not demonstrate a clear causal correlation between Maryland's extended provisional duration and superior overall safety outcomes.

SB0856 preserves driver education, supervised practice, road testing, and enforcement penalties.

V Comparative State Structure

Most neighboring states structure graduated licensing systems primarily around adolescent drivers and do not impose extended provisional durations on adults who have completed testing and education requirements.¹⁰

Maryland's 18-month provisional duration, applied uniformly to all first-time drivers regardless of age, is longer and broader in scope than many comparable jurisdictions.

SB0856 aligns Maryland's adult licensing structure more closely with neighboring states while preserving teen-specific protections.

VI Workforce Context

Although the Committee's primary focus is safety and statutory structure, the duration of provisional status has measurable economic consequences. In the Baltimore-Columbia-Towson metropolitan area:

- Approximately 1.47 million total jobs exist.¹¹
- Hundreds of HVAC and CDL positions are currently posted.¹²
- Many positions offer wages exceeding \$30 per hour.¹³

Employers in these sectors frequently require a full, unrestricted driver's license due to insurance underwriting standards.

Adults who have completed all statutory licensing requirements may experience up to an 18-month delay in workforce entry solely due to provisional duration.

SB0856 addresses that duration without modifying competency standards.

VII Conclusion

SB0856 does not dismantle Maryland's graduated licensing framework. It preserves:

- Driver education requirements,
- Supervised practice requirements,

- Road testing requirements,
- Enforcement penalties, and
- Teen graduated licensing protections.

It addresses only the duration of provisional status as applied to adults who have completed all statutory requirements.

For these reasons, NCIA respectfully urges the Committee to issue a favorable report on SB0856.

Respectfully submitted,

Carole Argo
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National Center on Institutions and Alternatives

Citations

1. 1998 Md. Laws ch. 483 (H.B. 527).
2. Md. Code Ann., Transp. § 16-111 (provisional license requirements).
3. Ins. Inst. for Highway Safety, Graduated Driver Licensing Overview (2023), <https://www.iihs.org/topics/teenagers/graduated-licensing-laws-table>.
4. Nat'l Highway Traffic Safety Admin., Countermeasures That Work: Graduated Driver Licensing Systems (10th ed. 2020), <https://www.nhtsa.gov>.
5. A.E. Curry et al., Age Differences in Novice Driver Crash Risk, 54 J. Safety Res. 51 (2015).
6. Md. Dep't of Transp., ZeroDeathsMD 2025 Traffic Fatality Update (2026), <https://zerodeathsmd.gov>.
7. Md. Dep't of Transp., Strategic Highway Safety Plan Update (2025).
8. Ins. Inst. for Highway Safety, Fatality Facts 2023: State by State, <https://www.iihs.org/research-areas/fatality-statistics/detail/state-by-state>.
9. TRIP, Addressing America's Traffic Safety Crisis: Maryland (2025), <https://tripnet.org>.
10. Ins. Inst. for Highway Safety, Graduated Licensing Laws by State (2024), <https://www.iihs.org>.
11. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Baltimore-Columbia-Towson, MD Metropolitan Area Employment Data, <https://www.bls.gov/regions/mid-atlantic>.
12. Indeed.com, HVAC & CDL Job Listings – Baltimore, MD (2026), <https://www.indeed.com>.
13. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics – Baltimore MSA (2024), <https://www.bls.gov>.