

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

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

I am the proud 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, and I submit this testimony in strong support of SB0856.

Each day, we serve Marylanders who are determined to build a different future for themselves and their families. Our students are primarily urban residents, underrepresented in the workforce, and economically disadvantaged. Many come from neighborhoods shaped by generational poverty, under resourced schools, unstable housing, and limited access to transportation. Some are returning from incarceration. Others are adults who had to leave school early to help support their families. Many grew up in households where stable employment was not the norm but the aspiration.

Yet, they show up. They enroll in CDL, HVAC, Automotive Technology, and other skilled trade programs. They commit to structured schedules, hands on instruction, workforce development training, and financial literacy education. They study. They practice. They test. They earn industry recognized certifications. They pass background checks. They pass the Motor Vehicle Administration road test. They take pride in their progress because they understand what it represents. It represents stability, dignity, and a chance to provide for their children.

For many of our students, a driver's license is not simply a credential. It is access to employment, access to better wages, and access to opportunity beyond the limitations of public transportation routes. Without a full license, job options narrow dramatically. Shift work becomes difficult. Positions that require travel between job sites become unavailable. Insurance restrictions eliminate otherwise qualified candidates. The absence of a full license reinforces the very inequities they are working to overcome.

Under current law, even after completing classroom instruction, behind the wheel training, supervised driving requirements, and passing the road test, adults must wait 18 months before receiving a full, unrestricted license.

*Changing Lives, One Person at a Time.*

Each cohort, we see numerous graduates denied employment solely because they hold a provisional license rather than a full, unrestricted license. This is not an isolated occurrence. It is a consistent and discouraging pattern that affects a meaningful portion of otherwise qualified, job ready adults. Employers in HVAC, automotive services, logistics, and public works are ready to hire them. These employers consistently praise the preparation and work ethic of our graduates. However, insurance underwriting standards require a full license. A provisional designation becomes a barrier that has nothing to do with skill or safety.

For our students, an 18 month delay is significant. It means postponed income and delayed independence. It means extended reliance on unstable work or public assistance. For parents, it can mean continued difficulty providing consistent housing, childcare, and transportation. For individuals returning home from incarceration, it can mean the difference between sustained employment and a setback. A policy designed for safety is unintentionally limiting mobility and economic advancement for adults who have already demonstrated responsibility.

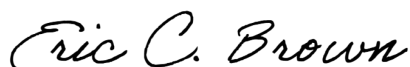
The Vocational Training Center is producing measurable results. We graduate more than 80 percent of program participants. Nearly 70 percent of our graduates secure employment shortly after completion. Many begin earning between 18 and 30 dollars per hour, with advancement opportunities that increase those wages over time. These outcomes create real economic opportunity for the Baltimore region. They reduce dependency, strengthen families, and supply skilled workers to high demand industries.

The impact would be even greater if graduates were not required to wait 18 months for full licensure. The training is complete. The employers are ready. The only remaining barrier is duration. SB0856 preserves all safety standards. Adults must still complete education, supervised practice, and road testing. Teen protections remain intact. The bill simply removes the extended provisional period for adults who have already demonstrated competency.

Our students are not asking for exceptions. They are asking for fairness. They have fought through generational poverty, limited resources, and educational gaps. They have chosen accountability over excuses. They have chosen skill development over stagnation. They are proud of what they have achieved.

Maryland has an opportunity to ensure that policy designed for safety does not unintentionally restrict those who have done everything right. For these reasons, I respectfully urge a favorable report on SB0856. Thank you for your leadership and your commitment to policies that protect the public while expanding opportunity for those striving to build a better future.

Respectfully submitted,



Eric C. Brown

VTC Program Director

