
January 28, 2026

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

RE: Letter of Information – Senate Bill 227 – Motor Vehicles – Parking – Disabled Veteran Special Registration Plates

Dear Chair Smith and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) takes no position on Senate Bill 227 but offers the following information for the Committee’s consideration.

SB 227 prohibits a State agency from adopting or enforcing a regulation or a policy that requires payment of a fee for parking a motor vehicle in a parking lot owned or controlled by the agency if the motor vehicle has disabled veteran special registration plates issued by the Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA). The bill creates a similar prohibition for a political subdivision of the State with regard to on-street parking served by a parking meter.

MDOT shares in the sponsor’s commitment to uplifting and promoting veterans in our State, as well as the commitment to the community of disabled veterans. In its individual capacity, MDOT, through the MVA, issues special registration plates for qualifying disabled veterans and designates veteran status on driver’s licenses and identification cards issued by the Administration. Further, MVA works with the Maryland Department of Veterans and Military Families Benefits Program to co-locate Veteran’s Benefits Offices at several MVA branch locations throughout the State, offering a one-stop-shop for those who need State resources offered through MVA to support federal veteran’s benefit requests. The department is also proud to partner with the Maryland Veterans Trust Fund to collect donations for veterans and their families who are facing financial hardship; MVA customers may make a donation when they renew their registration online, at an MVA self-service business kiosk, or during a scheduled appointment.

The MVA is responsible for reviewing applications for – and issuing disabled veteran registration plates to – qualified applicants. Presently, the MVA has three types of disabled veterans plates it issues. The first two plate types are authorized under Transportation Article (TR) § 13-619.4 and are issued only to those receiving a designation of 50%-100% disabled per the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Those that are 100% disabled or otherwise qualify for access to disabled parking spaces under TR § 13-616 receive one set of plates that have the universal symbol of access granting authority to use disabled parking spaces when the individual is present, while the rest do not have this symbol. Otherwise, these two plate types are the same in that the alpha-numeric code stamped on the plates contain the letters “DV” on them in addition to saying “Disabled Veteran” at the bottom of the plate.

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Additionally, the organization “Disabled American Veterans” (DAV) has an organizational plate authorized under TR § 13-619 with the same design along the bottom of the plate as those issued to members officially designated disabled under the required rating by the VA. The only difference in appearance between the DAV organizational plate and the disabled veteran plate is the DAV plates contain “SC” in the alpha-numeric code instead of “DV.” SB 227 as written does not designate which plate, if any, should qualify or not qualify under the bill. As a private organization, DAV chooses who qualifies to be a member. According to its website, a member is “any service member who was not dishonorably discharged and sustained an injury or illness during their time in the military—whether service connected by the VA or not—or anyone who aggravated a previous injury during his or her time in service, is eligible for DAV membership so long as they served during a period of armed conflict (does not have to be direct combat).”

At the Port of Baltimore, Cruise Maryland has offered year-round cruising since 2009 and is currently served by Royal Caribbean and Carnival Cruise Lines. Last year, the Cruise Maryland terminal saw more than 444,000 passenger movements from Baltimore. The Maryland Port Administration (MPA) operates the cruise facility, including on-site parking for cruise passengers and collection of associated parking fees. As set forth in the MPA’s tariff on file with the Federal Maritime Commission, the MPA collects parking fees on all cruise passenger-related vehicles parking at the Cruise Maryland terminal amounting to approximately 800 vehicle interactions each week. Additional training and coordination with staff will be required to ensure identification of the appropriate disabled veteran registration plates and ensure that the provisions of the bill are enforced.

Similarly to MPA, the Maryland Aviation Administration (MAA) operates on-site parking for those who utilize the Baltimore-Washington International Thurgood Marshall Airport (BWI Marshall) and the BWI Marshall Amtrak station. Currently, hourly, daily, express, and long term parking are available to suit the needs of the travelling public and those visiting BWI Marshall. Parking at BWI Marshall utilizes several automated systems to track space availability and for payment. MAA would need to modify these systems to account for vehicles with appropriate disabled veteran registration plates to accurately discount the parking services provided. Alternatively, MAA would need to retain staff to assist with reviewing parking tickets and registration plate and making the appropriate adjustment to payment.

Beyond the direct operational effects of SB 227 on parking at MAA, it is important to note that the revenue from parking at the airport is pledged to support bonds issued for construction of parking facilities and flows to the bondholders. A diversion of any portion of this revenue may impact the State’s position with bondholders and rating agencies. Additionally, MAA is evaluating the effect of this bill on grant assurances related to airport revenues under the Federal Aviation Administration’s Airport Improvement Program.

The Maryland Department of Transportation respectfully requests the committee consider this information during its deliberation of Senate Bill 227.

Respectfully submitted,

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Maryland Department of Transportation
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