

March 4, 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 856 – Motor Vehicles - Driver's Licenses - Eligibility**

Dear Chair Smith and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) takes no position on Senate Bill 856 but offers the following information for the Committee's consideration.

SB 856 would eliminate provisional licenses for any new driver who is 18 years or older. Currently, most provisional drivers must maintain an 18-month holding period. Moving violations and the use of alcohol or other substances while driving may result in an extended holding period. Notably, provisional license holders age 18 or older do not have additional limitations placed on their driving privileges, such as driving hours based on time of day or passenger limits.

Nationally, the average age of first-time applicants has steadily increased over the past two decades. Multiple studies demonstrate that it is not the driver's age that contributes to higher rates of moving violation citations and crash risk, but rather the lack of driving experience. The provisional law ensures rookie drivers gain experience under qualified supervision to build a lifetime of safe driving behavior. At the same time, it acknowledges the difference in responsibilities and life stage of a new driver that is over the age of 18 by allowing them to make their own decisions about driving hours and passengers.

In conversations with the bill sponsor and advocates, the Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA) has learned that some stakeholders are concerned that the provisional license indicator is impacting their ability to be employed at jobs requiring a driver's license. The MVA understands these concerns and has offered to engage in a more comprehensive study of the topic with stakeholders, including employers, non-profit employment training centers, and insurers, to examine how to avoid any undue economic hardships and impediments to career advancement without posing a risk to roadway users in Maryland.

The Maryland Department of Transportation respectfully requests the committee consider this information during its deliberation of Senate Bill 856.

Respectfully submitted,

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