

MCPA-MSA X HB 1166 Front License Requirement - SUP

Uploaded by: Samira Jackson

Position: FAV



Maryland Chiefs of Police Association Maryland Sheriffs' Association



MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr., Chair and
Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Darren Popkin, Executive Director, MCPA-MSA Joint Legislative Committee
Andrea Mansfield, Representative, MCPA-MSA Joint Legislative Committee
Samira Jackson, Representative, MCPA-MSA Joint Legislative Committee

DATE: April 1, 2026

RE: **HB 1166 - Motor Vehicles - Dealers - Front Registration Plate Display**

POSITION: **SUPPORT**

The Maryland Chiefs of Police Association (MCPA) and the Maryland Sheriffs' Association (MSA) **SUPPORT HB 1166**. This bill appropriately requires vehicle dealers in Maryland to provide and install a front registration plate bracket at the time of sale when a vehicle is required to display two plates. Without a statutory requirement that dealers provide the necessary bracket, compliance with Maryland's two-plate law becomes less likely. Ensuring that vehicles are equipped at the point of sale promotes uniform compliance, eliminates confusion, and prevents situations where a lawful requirement is undermined simply because the proper mounting hardware was not installed.

Maintaining a two-plate registration system remains critical to public safety and effective enforcement. Law enforcement agencies increasingly rely on automated license plate readers and other technology to identify stolen vehicles, vehicles with expired registrations, and vehicles associated with criminal activity. The ability to capture a plate from either direction, whether a vehicle is approaching or moving away from an officer, is essential. A single-plate system would significantly reduce investigative efficiency and limit the functionality of these tools.

A two-plate system is also vital when scanning parked vehicles. If only one plate is displayed, a vehicle may be positioned so that the plate is not visible, requiring an officer to exit their patrol vehicle and physically walk behind each automobile to verify registration information. This is inefficient, time-consuming, and in certain circumstances creates avoidable safety risks.

Further, Maryland's automated tolling infrastructure depends on capturing clear images of both front and rear plates. Rear plates are frequently obstructed, altered, or covered by lawful obstructions such as bike racks. The availability of a front plate provides critical redundancy to ensure accurate vehicle identification and accountability. For these reasons, MCPA and MSA **SUPPORT HB 1166** and urge a **FAVORABLE** report.

532 Baltimore Boulevard, Suite 308
Westminster, Maryland 21157
667-314-3216 / 667-314-3236

HB1166

Uploaded by: Sharon Ringley

Position: FAV

JULIE PALAKOVICH CARR
Legislative District 17
Montgomery County

Ways and Means Committee
Chair, Revenues Subcommittee

Chair, Montgomery County
House Delegation



The Maryland House of Delegates
6 Bladen Street, Room 202
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3037
800-492-7122 Ext. 3037
Julie.PalakovichCarr@house.maryland.gov

THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony in Support of HB 1166
Motor Vehicles - Dealers - Front Registration Plate Display

Maryland is one of 31 states that requires vehicles to display both a front and rear license plate. Unfortunately, some Maryland motorists do not comply with state law. This poses a threat to public safety as well as causes the State to lose out on toll revenues. HB 1166 would make it easier for Maryland drivers to comply with state law by requiring vehicles sold in Maryland to have a front plate holder installed at the time of sale or lease.

Background

Maryland state law requires two license plates for most vehicles. Not displaying a front license plate is a misdemeanor, subject to a fine of up to \$500. Thousands of citations are issued each year in Maryland for failure to display a front license plate. In 2025, over 4,000 citations were issued.

Although some car owners are willfully breaking the law by choosing not to install a front license plate, others are simply unaware of the law or struggling to comply when their new car does not have a front plate holder installed by the auto dealer.

Threats to Public Safety

Front license plates serve an important public safety function by making it easier for law enforcement or a witness to a crime to see the license plate number. This information aids in law enforcement investigations, in the pursuit of hit and run cases, and during AMBER and Silver alerts.

The Maryland State Police stated in their informational testimony that "From a public safety perspective, the additional front plate plays a pivotal role for investigators. Officers and civilian witnesses across the state can easily identify and report vehicles suspected of involvement in criminal activities, missing-person cases, hit-and-run collisions, or other motor vehicle-related investigations."

Impacts on Toll Revenues

Front license plates are also an important part of Maryland's video tolling system. When a vehicle's E-ZPass is not detected or read, then imagery of the vehicle's plates is needed to bill the motorist for their toll. According to the Maryland Transportation Authority, during 2024 there were 15.1 million transactions for which a license plate was used to invoice the vehicle owner. Although use of imagery of the rear plate is standard, it is not always visible, such as if the vehicle is towing a trailer or has a bike rack obscuring the rear plate. Consequently, 43% of the time front license plate information was used to identify and invoice the vehicle owner. Without front license plates, the State would have lost the ability to invoice 6.6 million transactions totaling \$35 million in toll revenue.

What This Bill Does

HB 1166 would make it easier for Marylanders who are buying or leasing a vehicle to comply with the state's front license plate law. The bill would require licensed auto dealers to equip new vehicles being sold or leased and registered in Maryland with a front license plate bracket or other mounting mechanism prior to delivering the vehicle to the customer. The bill includes an opt out mechanism: the buyer or lessee could sign a written acknowledgement that they refused installation and that they understand that Maryland law requires a front license plate. The bill then requires sellers to send the signed waivers to the MVA when the vehicle registration paperwork is submitted to the MVA. HB 1166 as passed by the House also includes a liability release for dealers who submit the signed waiver to the MVA.

This legislation is modeled after a California law that has required similar compliance and disclosures since 2004. California's long standing approach demonstrates that this policy is workable.

This legislation will help Marylanders to abide by the law, will preserve our toll revenues, and will help our public safety officials to do their job.

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Uploaded by: J Peter Kitzmiller

Position: UNF

Maryland Automobile Dealers Association

Serving Maryland's New Car and Truck Dealers

Testimony on House Bill 1166 (As Amended)

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

Good afternoon Chair, Vice Chair, and members of the Committee.

My name is Peter Kitzmiller, President of the Maryland Automobile Dealers Association. Our association represents approximately 300 franchised new car and truck dealers and their 20,000 employees across the State of Maryland. I am testifying today in opposition to House Bill 1166, as amended.

While we appreciate the effort to address concerns in the House, the amended bill still does not solve the underlying issue.

There has been no data presented demonstrating that front license plate violations are increasing in Maryland. Without evidence of a growing compliance problem, it is difficult to justify the requirement.

The bill does not improve compliance. Requiring a signed disclosure does not result in a front license plate being installed, and there is no enforcement mechanism tied to the form.

A signed form does not put a license plate on a car.

Dealers have little control over whether a front license plate is ultimately installed. Vehicles leave the dealership on temporary tags, and in many cases permanent plates are mailed directly to the customer. Dealers are being required to document something they cannot control.

The bill shifts enforcement responsibility to dealers by requiring us to collect and submit documentation related to a customer's decision. Enforcement of vehicle equipment laws should remain with law enforcement and the Motor Vehicle Administration.

The House amendment requiring that these signed disclosures be shared with the State Police raises additional concerns. This provision effectively turns dealers into a conduit of information to law enforcement about customers who have not violated the

law. A customer signing a disclosure does not mean they are out of compliance, yet their information is still transmitted.

This injects law enforcement into a retail transaction and places dealers in the position of reporting their own customers, without improving compliance.

The bill remains a paperwork exercise that does not change behavior.

California has a similar disclosure requirement, and it has not resulted in increased compliance with front license plate laws. Enforcement continues to be handled through law enforcement—not dealer paperwork.

For these reasons, we respectfully request an unfavorable report on House Bill 1166.

Thank you, and I would be happy to answer any questions.

HB 1166_ Motor Vehicles - Dealers - Front Registr

Uploaded by: Trudy Tibbals

Position: UNF

HB 1166: Motor Vehicles - Dealers - Front Registration Plate Display: Please vote to **OPPOSE** this bill.

Dear Judicial Proceedings Committee:

I am writing to strongly urge you to **OPPOSE HB 1166**.

Requiring only a single license plate on vehicles would make it significantly more difficult to identify vehicles involved in traffic violations, criminal activity, or hit-and-run incidents. Two plates—front and rear—provide law enforcement officers, traffic cameras, toll systems, and witnesses with additional opportunities to accurately identify a vehicle from multiple angles. Reducing that visibility weakens an important public safety tool.

Maryland law (§ 13-411) currently mandates front plate display. Allowing dealers to routinely deliver vehicles with simply front mounting hardware and NOT an actual front license plate (and requiring only a signed waiver) effectively weakens a proven tool that helps police keep our roads safe.

Dealers should not be placed in the position of facilitating or documenting choices that directly undermine public safety. Existing law already holds drivers accountable for proper plate display; this bill adds unnecessary bureaucracy to dealers actually incentivizes the very behavior that endangers law enforcement and the public.

While there may be arguments about cost savings or aesthetics, **public safety and accountability should remain the priority.** The modest administrative convenience of issuing a single plate does not outweigh the potential risks associated with making vehicle identification more difficult.

For these reasons—primarily the critical importance of front license plates for rapid vehicle identification and public safety—I respectfully ask you to **vote against HB 1166** and preserve Maryland's current requirement for front plate display without creating loopholes at the point of sale.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration of my concerns regarding this public safety issue.

Sincerely,

Trudy Tibbals

MDSP_LOI_HB1166.pdf

Uploaded by: Breanna Mowbray

Position: INFO



State of Maryland
Department of State Police
Government Affairs Section
Annapolis Office (410) 260-6100

POSITION ON PROPOSED LEGISLATION

DATE: April 1, 2026

BILL NUMBER: House Bill 1166 **POSITION:** Letter of Information

BILL TITLE: Motor Vehicles - Dealers - Front Registration Plate Display

REVIEW AND ANALYSIS:

This legislation prohibits a motor vehicle dealer from delivering a motor vehicle without front registration plate mounting hardware or from requiring the buyer or lessee to sign a written statement acknowledging the refusal to install the mounting hardware. It also requires a motor vehicle dealer to report, on a monthly basis, certain information regarding the decline in the installation of front registration plate mounting hardware to the Motor Vehicle Administration.

Current law requires the Motor Vehicle Administration to issue two registration plates. The vehicle must display both plates unless it falls into one of three vehicle classes: Class D (motorcycle), Class F (tractor), or Class G (trailer). Motorcycles and trailers must display the plate on the rear, while a tractor must display the plate on the front.

From a public safety perspective, the additional front plate plays a pivotal role for investigators. Officers and civilian witnesses across the state can easily identify and report vehicles suspected of involvement in criminal activities, missing-person cases, hit-and-run collisions, or other motor vehicle-related investigations. Because Maryland Law requires front and rear plates, officers and witnesses gain a few additional seconds to view the plate as the vehicle approaches, as well as another angle from the rear as it pulls away. This critical time period, with a view of the front plate, gives law enforcement another tool, as vehicles may travel at high speeds on controlled-access highways, and the window to view the rear plate remains minimal. This period could be essential in an investigation that leads to the successful apprehension of a criminal or to the location of a missing or endangered person, as broadcast during an Amber, Silver, or Blue Alert.

Maryland Law Enforcement also utilizes the License Plate Readers (LPR) Program, which includes units at fixed locations and in mobile deployments. The removal of the front license plate requirement will reduce the number of Maryland-registered vehicles that will be scanned. This could lead to Maryland Law Enforcement missing a suspect or a victim's vehicle in a key investigation. The LPR Program statistics indicate that 30-40% of all tags scanned in mobile applications are on front registration plates, so it is imperative that motor vehicle dealers equip all vehicles with front registration plate mounting hardware.

State of Maryland
Department of State Police
Government Affairs Section
Annapolis Office (410) 260-6100

POSITION ON PROPOSED LEGISLATION

For these reasons, the Maryland Department of State Police urges the Committee to consider this information as it deliberates on House Bill 1166.