

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2020 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Third Reader - Revised

House Bill 158

(Chair, Environment and Transportation Committee)(By
Request - Departmental - State Police)

Environment and Transportation

Judicial Proceedings

Vehicle Laws - Equipment and Inspections - Standards and Requirements

This departmental bill modifies vehicle equipment and safety standards set forth in the Maryland Vehicle Law, generally to conform to federal requirements, address technology advancements, and repeal outdated or obsolete requirements.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The bill does not materially affect State finances or operations.

Local Effect: The bill does not materially affect local government finances or operations.

Small Business Effect: The Department of State Police (DSP) has determined that this bill has minimal or no impact on small business (attached). The Department of Legislative Services concurs with this assessment. (The attached assessment does not reflect amendments to the bill.)

Analysis

Bill Summary/Current Law: The bill affects several provisions of law related to equipment and safety standards for windshields, lighting equipment (*e.g.*, headlamps, stop lamps, signal lamps, *etc.*), and the performance ability of brakes. The bill also revises standards for the licensing of inspection stations and mechanics.

Obstruction to Driver's View or Driving Mechanism/Windshields

The bill expands upon and clarifies exceptions to the general requirement that a person may not drive a vehicle with any sign, poster, card, sticker, or other transparent material on the windshield, side wings, or side or rear windows of the vehicle. For instance, the bill allows materials to be placed on the windshield in compliance with security measures required by a federal or State government agency (as long as the decal is affixed to the vehicle in accordance with the issuing agency's guidelines). The bill also clarifies provisions related to the existing required medical certification for window tinting beyond the 35% light transmittance threshold. Further, the bill establishes additional requirements related to windshield washers.

Driving with Improper Equipment

Current law specifies that the use of additional parts and accessories on any vehicle is acceptable (so long as such usage is consistent with the provisions of Title 22 of the Transportation Article, which sets forth standards for vehicle equipment). The bill provides greater detail to this authorization by specifying, for example, that a person is prohibited from operating equipment intended for off-road use while the vehicle is being driven on a highway.

Vehicle Lighting Equipment, Stop Lamps, Turn Signals, Etc.

The bill establishes new requirements with regard to stop lamps. While the requirements vary based on the type of vehicle (*e.g.*, passenger vehicle, pickup truck, van, sport utility vehicle, *etc.*), the bill generally requires that a vehicle be equipped with a red center high mount stop lamp (mounted with its center on the vertical centerline of the vehicle as the vehicle is viewed from the rear).

The bill makes several other changes to lighting and signaling equipment, generally conforming State law to federal law. Some of the bill's changes accommodate changing technologies. For example, the bill authorizes a vehicle used to provide what are commonly known as ride share services to be equipped with (and display) a static red, blue, or other color lighted sign identifying the operator and the vehicle as a provider of transportation network services.

Used Vehicle Inspections

Finally, the bill revises inspection provisions to reflect licensing (rather than registration) of inspection stations and mechanics. Under current law, DSP is authorized to administer an exam for inspection mechanic applicants. However, the bill adds greater specificity to

requirements related to the exam and establishes that the exam must include both a written test and a practical test.

Background: DSP advises that the bill is intended to conform the Maryland Vehicle Law to automotive equipment regulations and standards followed by the automotive industry (pursuant to federal law and trade-industry recommendations) in the construction of vehicles for sale in the United States. In addition, the bill addresses technology advancements and improvements. Finally, the bill is intended to improve the licensing and regulation of the vehicle safety inspection program (and of the mechanics employed by licensed inspection stations).

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Department of State Police; Maryland Department of Transportation; Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 4, 2020
rh/ljm Third Reader - March 14, 2020
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Analysis by: Eric F. Pierce

Direct Inquiries to:
(410) 946-5510
(301) 970-5510

ANALYSIS OF ECONOMIC IMPACT ON SMALL BUSINESSES

TITLE OF BILL: Vehicle Laws - Equipment and Inspections - Standards and Requirements

BILL NUMBER: HB 158

PREPARED BY: Thomas Williams

PART A. ECONOMIC IMPACT RATING

This agency estimates that the proposed bill:

X WILL HAVE MINIMAL OR NO ECONOMIC IMPACT ON MARYLAND SMALL BUSINESS

OR

WILL HAVE MEANINGFUL ECONOMIC IMPACT ON MARYLAND SMALL BUSINESSES

PART B. ECONOMIC IMPACT ANALYSIS

This legislation revises in law the type of equipment to be approved by inspection mechanics in the inspection of used vehicles. The equipment standards are part of the Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards. Vehicles are already being manufactured with this equipment. MD law needs to catch up to the national standards.