



HB 0346 - Vehicle Laws- Failure to Pay Video Toll- Reform Penalties

January 14th, 2021

SUPPORT

Chairmen Barve, Vice-Chair and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 346. This bill addresses consequences on Maryland drivers received through penalty from video toll violations that will exacerbate financial hardships.

The CASH Campaign of Maryland promotes economic advancement for low-to-moderate income individuals and families in Baltimore and across Maryland. CASH accomplishes its mission through operating a portfolio of direct service programs, building organizational and field capacity, and leading policy and advocacy initiatives to strengthen family economic stability. CASH and its partners across the state achieve this by providing free tax preparation services through the IRS program 'VITA', offering free financial education and coaching, and engaging in policy research and advocacy. **Almost 4,000 of CASH's tax preparation clients earn less than \$10,000 annually. More than half earn less than \$20,000.**

Many Marylanders pay to use roads to have access to their jobs, school, and other resources. Tolls can be paid by using E-ZPass, cash, and video tolling when cash is not an option. Cashless tolls do not allow drivers to pay the toll fee while driving. Also, many drivers do not have a bank account linked to refill their E-ZPass or the E-ZPass could malfunction. This means they have to pay the toll through a video toll charge, which is sent through the mail. The problem is that some customers are not receiving the charges through the mail.

The driver is supposed to be notified about the original charge, the failure to pay charge (\$50 per transaction), and then notified before the charges are sent to Maryland's Central Collection Unit (CCU). Another fee is added to the total amount sent to CCU. Once the fee is at CCU, there has to be an initial down payment made before being allowed to enter into a payment plan. Some people do not receive these notices for various reasons. This means that for some drivers, they do not know what they owe until their balance is at CCU. This leaves them in tremendous debt with limited options.

The practice of suspending motor vehicle registration is harmful to drivers in many aspects. It will limit their access to healthcare, education, food, and other resources. This punishment limits a workers' ability to go to work. This will in turn limit that worker's ability to pay their fines.

This bill addresses this by:

- repealing the requirement that the Motor Vehicle Administration, under certain circumstances, suspends the registration of a motor vehicle that incurs a certain toll violation.

For these reasons, we encourage a favorable report HB 346.