
February 16, 2021

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

Re: Letter of Support – Senate Bill 569– Driver's Licenses, Learner's Instructional Permits, and Identification Cards - Applications and Renewals

Dear Chairman Smith and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) supports Senate Bill 569 in order to increase efficiencies and flexibility for the MDOT Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA) customers by decreasing required in-person visits and increasing access to electronic services.

Senate Bill 569 enacts several customer service-oriented reforms for driver's licenses, permits, and identification cards. Senate Bill 569 will permit the issuance of temporary identification cards up to 90 days; will repeal the requirement that copies of school attendance records be a certified copy for those obtaining a learner's permit; will extend visual acuity certification by licensed physicians or optometrists to two years from the current 12 months; will extend renewal windows for driver's licenses from six months to 12; and will allow greater use of electronic renewals if customer's photos have been updated within the requisite window allowed under current federal REAL ID requirements.

The changes to driver licensing under Senate Bill 569 will improve both new and renewal transactions for customers. Marylanders will be eligible to renew a driver's license within twelve months before its expiration instead of the current six-month limit. Extending the renewal window to one year would make approximately an additional 60,000 Marylanders eligible to become REAL ID compliant before the new federal deadline of October 1, 2021 just through the standard renewal process as well as benefit members of the military and college students living out of state. Senate Bill 569 will also permit the issuance of a temporary identification card for up to 90 days to aid customers gathering REAL ID documentation. This authority currently exists for driver's licenses.

Additionally, Senate Bill 569 will allow a customer to renew a driver's license without appearing in person if their photograph was taken less than 16 years prior to renewal. Currently in-person renewal is required every other renewal cycle, even if the customer obtained a corrected or duplicate product in the interim which required a photo to be taken. Amending the in-person requirement will increase access to alternative renewal through the MDOT MVA eStore.

The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr.
Page Two

Senate Bill 569 will also reduce the frequency of in-branch vision screening by increasing from one year to two years the period of validity for an eye test administered by a qualified eye care provider. Often the vision test requirement is the only barrier preventing a customer over 40 from renewing online or by mail, so extending the validity period of the vision test, which is still in line with standard medical guidance of testing one-two years, would increase availability of renewal without a branch visit.

Finally, Senate Bill 569 will streamline processes for applicants for a learner's instructional permit by repealing the requirement that the copy of school attendance record submitted by an applicant for a learner's permit be a certified copy. This will promote more electronic transmission, allowing the Administration to better utilize the digital solutions possible under the coming Phase II Customer Connect IT modernization which is planned for late 2021.

In enacting these reforms to the MDOT MVA procedures, Maryland has an opportunity to better streamline and improve upon the premier customer service the MDOT MVA can offer to customers with greater efficiencies and increased flexibilities. For these reasons, the Maryland Department of Transportation respectfully requests the Committee grant Senate Bill 569 a favorable report.

Respectfully submitted,

Christine E. Nizer
Administrator
Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration
410-787-7830

Melissa Einhorn
State Legislative Officer
Maryland Department of Transportation
410-865-1102