



## HB 175- Maryland Transportation Authority - Options for the Payment of Tolls and Civil Penalties

House Environment and Transportation Committee

March 03, 2022

### SUPPORT

Chairman Barve, Vice-Chair and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of House Bill 175. This bill will give drivers an opportunity to pay their video toll charges in an obtainable manner.

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 that helps them access their jobs, school, and other resources. 100% of Maryland toll road are cashless toll roads. Cashless tolls do not allow drivers to pay the toll fee while driving, so they must pay the toll by using an E-ZPass or by video tolling. The driver is supposed to be notified about the original charge, then receive a failure to pay charge (\$25 per transaction), and then be notified before their charges are sent to Maryland's Central Collection Unit (CCU). The problem is that many customers are not receiving the charges through the mail. This results in drivers being completely unaware about the charges they are accruing.

Unfortunately, there are numerous drivers who are unaware of their video toll charges until months after the original charge or until it is sent to Maryland's CCU. Since there is a fee on every transaction, fees tend to add up quickly. There will be at least two charges per trip on a toll road: one to drive to the destination and one to return. If a driver is unaware about the charges they are accruing, they can easily have 10 or more transactions in one week for using the toll roads for everyday activities. For example, one month of going to work 5 days a week can amount to \$1,000 in penalty fees.

COVID-19 has exasperated problems with driver receiving their notices. The Maryland Transportation Authority (MDTA) paused the mailing of notices for customers who used toll facilities without an E-ZPass<sup>1</sup>. This is resulting in customers receiving hundreds of dollars in video toll fees with limited options to pay. On top of video toll charges and the penalty fee on each charge, another fee is added to the total amount sent to CCU. Once the amount is sent to CCU, there are limited payment plan options. According to the Federal Reserve, **we know that many Americans would struggle to produce \$400 quickly**<sup>2</sup>. This typically leads to negative credit scores, wage garnishments, and force many Maryland drivers to "toll bankruptcy."

Maryland's current video toll system is financially punitive, and a barrier to people paying their original charge. HB 175 gives drivers the opportunity to be accountable for their original amount and any associated fees in a way that is less harmful to them.

***For these reasons, we encourage you to return a favorable report for HB 175.***

---

<sup>1</sup> [WALB](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Federal Reserve](#)