



*Advocating better skills, jobs, and incomes*

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF House Bill 175:**

**Maryland Transportation Authority – Program for Payment of Unpaid Video Tolls**

TO: Hon. Kumar P. Barve, Chair, and members of the House Environment and Transportation Committee

FROM: Caleb Jasso, Policy Advocate

DATE: March 3, 2022

The Job Opportunities Task Force (JOTF) is an independent, nonprofit organization that develops and advocates policies and programs to increase the skills, job opportunities, and incomes of low-skill, low-wage workers and job seekers in Maryland. We support **House Bill 175** as a means to ensure that residents not only have access to, but are notified of their eligibility for, a program to resolve unpaid video tolls and related civil penalties.

According to the official MDTA [website](#), Video Tolling (sometimes referred to as video billing) is a form of electronic toll collection, which uses still images of a vehicle's license plate to identify a vehicle liable to pay a toll. The image is captured as the vehicle drives under the gantry or through a toll plaza at a toll-collection facility. This system has been highly successful historically, however, due to technical challenges created by changing vendors and COVID-19 policies which led many Marylanders to confusion, overbilling and the accumulation of charges, without the drivers knowledge, video tolling has quickly become quite financially burdensome. To begin to ease this burden, the Maryland Transportation Authority Board has approved a new plan that establishes a grace period for unpaid tolls, waiving civil penalties for anyone who pays their outstanding bills in full beginning February 24th and ending Dec. 1st, [2022](#).

The extra nine months to settle any outstanding toll bills, although a welcome temporary reprieve, is not enough of a permanent solution to solve the ongoing confusion and financial challenges accrued over the course of deferment due to the continued toll charges and the lack of billing that followed for customers who did not possess an EZ-Pass. Additionally, according to John Sales, an agency spokesman, this issue has led to an approximate \$39 million in unpaid invoices - a significant amount of which was accrued between March 2020 and October [2020](#). Furthermore, the MDTA has made it very clear that the grace period is not a forgiveness of unpaid tolls, but is an attempt to allow customers to catch up on their payments without accruing any further penalties. The grace period is a welcome sign of relief for many Marylanders with unsettled toll payments, however, the charges each come with an individual \$25 citation, adding to the problem further - especially for those with fixed and or low incomes who have accrued hundreds if not thousands of dollars in video toll violations.

# JOTF JOB OPPORTUNITIES TASK FORCE

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By establishing a program for residents to resolve unpaid video tolls and related civil penalties, including the stipulation that a resident must be notified of their eligibility for the program, and authorizing a monthly installment plan, **House Bill 175**, will provide Marylanders a means to pay off their outstanding account balances in a way less financially burdensome to them. Additionally, the current stipulations of the bill to waive 70% of delinquent video tolls and related penalties that became delinquent before July 1, 2022, and the requirement of residents to obtain an EZ-Pass by June 30, 2024, will also help alleviate the current financial burden residents have while ensuring that this issue will not happen again. For these reasons, we urge a favorable vote on **House Bill 175**.

**For more information, contact:**

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