



## **Testimony in Support of HB29**

### **Vehicle Laws – Penalties for Failure to Pay Video Toll and Electronic Tolling Performance Audit Wednesday, March 30, 2022**

TO: The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr., Chair; The Honorable Jeff Waldstreicher, Vice Chair; and Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Tiffany Jones, Chair, Montgomery County Community Action Board

The Montgomery County Community Action Board, the County's federally designated anti-poverty group, supports HB29, which addresses a policy that disproportionately impacts lower-income residents. This bill would prohibit the Motor Vehicle Administration from suspending a person's car registration for failure to pay a video toll fine.

Here in Montgomery County, where the cost of living is so high, video toll fines are just one of many challenges facing lower-income residents. The Self-Sufficiency Standard, which measures the actual cost of living in a given geographic location, for a Montgomery County family of three with one adult, one infant, and one preschooler, is over \$103,000 – more than three times the County's minimum wage income.<sup>1</sup> Individuals who are struggling to pay for basic necessities such as housing, childcare, and food, are likely unable to pay for fines received from video tolls. Having one's vehicle registration suspended perpetuates the problem by potentially causing drivers to lose jobs that require long commutes, especially when no public transportation options are available, and by causing these drivers to incur costs associated with reinstating a suspended car registration.

This issue is exacerbated for many lower-income people who need to move frequently due to lack of affordable housing and may not receive bills in the first place. This is also an equity issue for diverse areas such as Montgomery County where over 40% of residents five and older speak a language other than English at home. Many of these drivers may not be able to read English well enough to carefully review video toll fines they receive in the mail.<sup>2</sup>

By preventing the MVA from suspending vehicle registrations for failure to pay such fines, HB29 would help to break the cycle of poverty for many lower-income Marylanders. We strongly encourage the Committee to pass HB29.

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<sup>1</sup> Self-Sufficiency Standard <http://www.selfsufficiencystandard.org/>

<sup>2</sup> American Community Survey <https://www.census.gov/>