
March 23, 2022

The Honorable Kumar P. Barve
Chair, House Environment and Transportation Committee
Room 251, House Office Building
Annapolis MD 21401

RE: Letter of Support – Senate Bill 709 – Commercial Driver’s License – Vision Screening and Learner’s Permit Alterations

Dear Chair Barve and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Transportation supports Senate Bill 709 as a customer service improvement for Commercial Learner’s Permit (CLP) and Commercial Driver’s License (CDL) holders, allowing for greater flexibility for these drivers.

Senate Bill 709 would allow the MDOT Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA) to accept a Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) medical examiners certificate (MEC) as proof of meeting vision standards for CDL license renewal and extends to one year the amount of time an individual can hold a CLP.

Currently, the MVA requires all driver’s license holders under the age of 21 and over the age of 39 to complete a vision examination every eight years in order to renew their driver’s license. This includes both non-commercial driver’s license holders and holders of CDLs. The FMCSA requires CDL holders to have a complete full medical examination every two years, which includes a vision exam that meets the Maryland vision standards for an unrestricted license. Upon passage of the exam, the individual receives a MEC. This biennial exam is conducted more frequently than the Maryland requirement.

Should a health condition disqualify a CDL holder from receiving a MEC, including failure to meet vision requirements, a MEC would not be issued. This would result in the driver being downgraded, therefore, subject to the same vision exam requirements as a standard license holder.

Passage of Senate Bill 709 will allow almost 11,000 commercial drivers to remain on the roadways and avoid having to pursue duplicative tasks over the next calendar year. Providing for this reform will allow those CDL holders to potentially renew their driver’s license online, instead of visiting a MVA branch office, further enhancing MVA’s ability to provide premier customer service.

Further, Senate Bill 709 will align Maryland law with federal regulatory changes enacted in 2019, to extend the CLP term from 180 days to 365 days. This will allow CLP holders additional

The Honorable Kumar P. Barve
Page Two

time behind the wheel to practice the necessary skills for safe operation of a commercial vehicle and encourage more individuals to pursue a CDL.

Under current State law, CLP holders only have 180 days before they must complete the skills test to obtain their CDL. The skills testing is segmented into to three parts, which take approximately one to two hours to complete. In some cases, if a driver cannot complete all segments of their testing within the 180 days, a driver would have to retest for their CLP. This time-consuming retest can be discouraging for some drivers.

The MVA issued 11,186 CLPs in Fiscal Year 2022. Of those, just 5,880 went on to pass their skills test within the initial 180 days. Another 5,259 CLP holders in Fiscal Year 2022 either obtained a second CLP or allowed theirs to expire without renewing and just 57 of those passed on another CLP as of early July 2022.

By passing Senate Bill 709, the MVA can better expedite the renewal process for CDL holders, while still maintaining important safety standards, and assist more CPL holders in being fully prepared to successfully complete the skills test. For these reasons, the Maryland Department of Transportation respectfully requests the Committee grant Senate Bill 709 a favorable report.

Respectfully submitted,

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

Pilar Helm
Director of Government Affairs
Maryland Department of Transportation
410-865-1090