

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2026 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Third Reader - Revised

House Bill 1166

(Delegate Palakovich Carr)

Economic Matters and Environment and
Transportation

Judicial Proceedings

Motor Vehicles - Dealers - Front Registration Plate Display

This bill generally prohibits a motor vehicle dealer (as defined under § 15-101 of the Transportation Article) from delivering to the buyer or lessee a new motor vehicle that will be registered in the State and for which two registration plates are required, unless the motor vehicle is equipped with front registration plate mounting hardware or another secure front plate display mechanism. Alternatively, the buyer or lessee must sign a written statement acknowledging that (1) they declined the installation of the mounting hardware or display mechanism; (2) understand that State law requires the display of a registration plate on the front of the motor vehicle; (3) the hardware or display mechanism is available from the dealer; and (4) failure to display a front registration plate is a misdemeanor subject to a fine up to \$500.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA) can implement the bill with existing budgeted resources. The bill may have a (currently unquantifiable) effect on traffic fine and toll collection revenues, as discussed below.

Local Effect: The bill does not directly affect local government operations or finances.

Small Business Effect: Minimal.

Analysis

Bill Summary: A dealer must submit each signed written statement to MVA together with the documents required for registration of the vehicle under § 13-113 of the Transportation Article. A dealer who submits this statement may not be held liable under § 26-101 of the Transportation Article with respect to the buyer or lessee who signed the statement.

In addition, MVA must (1) develop a written statement for use by dealers and (2) adopt regulations to implement the bill, including procedures for the submission of written statements and the use and disclosure of information contained in a statement, including disclosure to law enforcement for enforcement of the existing two-registration-plate law.

Current Law:

Front Registration Plates

All vehicles are required to display two registration plates, unless they are in one of five vehicle classes. Class D (motorcycle), Class F (tractor), and Class G (trailer) vehicles are exempt from the two-registration-plate requirement. In addition, a Class L (historic) or Class N (street rod) vehicle is exempt if the vehicle was manufactured 50 years or more before the current model year. Class F vehicles are required to display the registration plate on the front of the vehicle. Historic and antique vehicles must display a current registration plate in the place provided on the vehicle. In addition, MVA must issue only one plate for vehicles with temporary registration.

An owner of a motor vehicle may not drive the vehicle or permit it to be driven on any highway in Maryland without validated registration plates, unless otherwise expressly authorized by MVA. Expired registration plates may not be displayed. A violation of these provisions is a misdemeanor, subject to a fine of up to \$500 or a prepayment fine of \$70.

Titling a Vehicle (§ 13-113 of the Transportation Article)

When a dealer sells and transfers a vehicle that is to be registered in the State, the dealer must (1) deliver the certificate of the title to the transferee or (2) send or electronically transmit the transferee's completed application for title and registration, other specified documents, and all taxes and fees required for titling the vehicle to MVA within 30 days of the delivery of the vehicle.

Parties to Violations of the Maryland Vehicle Law (§ 26-101 of the Transportation Article)

Any person who commits, attempts, or conspires to commit a violation of the Maryland Vehicle Law is guilty of the violation. The liability also applies to a person who aids or

abets another person in the commission of a violation and extends to any person who intentionally induces, causes, coerces, permits, or directs another person to commit a violation.

State Fiscal Effect: While the bill requires MVA and dealers and buyers of vehicles to engage in specified actions related to the two-registration-plate law, enforcement of the two-registration-plate law is conducted by law enforcement; MVA does not have independent enforcement authority.

Information is not available as to how many car owners or lessees fail to affix a front plate due to a lack of hardware or display mechanisms. To the extent the bill results in the increased installation of front registration plates, the bill may have downstream effects, including (1) reduced fines for violation of the two-registration-plate law and (2) increased toll collections. In fiscal 2025, there were 3,937 violations for driving with only one registration plate. The Maryland Transportation Authority (MDTA) advises that it uses camera images of both the front and rear license plate to identify vehicles passing through toll facilities (if an E-ZPass is not present). If the rear plate is obscured or the image is distorted, MDTA relies on the front plate to determine who owes the toll. Any such effects generated *solely* by the bill cannot be reliably quantified at this time.

Additional Information

Recent Prior Introductions: Similar legislation has not been introduced within the last three years.

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Maryland Department of Transportation; Department of Legislative Services

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