

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2026 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Third Reader - Revised

House Bill 1353

(Delegate Fair, *et al.*)

Environment and Transportation and
Health

Rules

Homeless Individuals - Fee and Examination Exemptions

This bill prohibits the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) from collecting a fee for certain copies of vital records issued to homeless individuals and establishes exemptions for homeless individuals from certain motor vehicle- and driving-related fees, including fees associated with driver's licenses and the Vehicle Emissions Inspection Program (VEIP). The bill also reduces the period of time, from nine months to three months, during which a homeless youth younger than age 19 who holds a learner's instructional permit must wait before taking a driver skills examination or driver road examination for a provisional license. By December 1, 2027, the Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA) must report to specified committees of the General Assembly on the number and types of fees that it did not impose on homeless individuals as a result of the bill.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Transportation Trust Fund (TTF) revenues decrease minimally beginning in FY 2027, as discussed below. General fund revenues for MDH are not anticipated to be materially affected as discussed below. State expenditures are not anticipated to be materially affected; MVA can handle the reporting requirement with existing resources.

Local Effect: The bill is not anticipated to materially affect local finances or operations, as discussed below.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary/Current Law:

Proof of Homelessness

The bill generally requires as proof of homelessness a signed written statement from a homeless services provider located in the State or, as specified by federal law, a local educational agency liaison or any designated school personnel that (1) affirms that the individual is homeless and (2) includes an address to which the relevant correspondence may be sent.

Vital Records

Under current law, MDH collects a \$10 or \$12 fee to access copies of vital records, including birth and death certificates and marriage and divorce records, among other documents. However, MDH is prohibited from collecting a fee for issuing a certified or abridged copy of a birth certificate to a homeless individual, as defined in the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. A homeless individual may receive one copy of a birth certificate without a fee in a single transaction.

The bill extends these fee exemptions to all vital records, instead of only birth certificates. “Vital record” means a certificate or report of birth, death, fetal death, marriage, divorce, dissolution or annulment of marriage, adoption, or adjudication of paternity that is required by law to be filed with the Secretary of Health.

Provisional Licensing Changes

The bill reduces the period of time, from nine months to three months, during which a homeless youth younger than age 19 who holds a learner’s instructional permit must wait before taking a driver skills examination or driver road examination for a provisional license.

The bill defines “homeless youth” as a child or youth who (1) is not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian; (2) is a homeless child or youth, as defined by the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act; and (3) was determined to be a homeless child or youth by specified individuals (*e.g.*, a local educational agency liaison or any designated school personnel).

Under current law, the holder of a learner’s instructional permit *younger than age 19* is generally prohibited from taking a driver skills or road examination for a provisional license within nine months from the date of issuance of the learner’s permit or from the

most recent date of conviction, or the granting of probation before judgment, for a moving violation. The learner's permit holder must also successfully complete an approved driver education program consisting of at least 30 hours of classroom instruction and at least 6 hours of highway driving instruction, as well as at least 60 hours of driving practice (including 10 hours of nighttime driving) supervised by a licensed driver who is 21 or older and has been licensed for three or more years. A learner's permit holder also has to submit a completed skills log book with the signatures of supervising drivers (and the signature of a parent, guardian, or other person, if applicable).

Also under current law, the holder of a learner's instructional permit who is *at least 18 years old and has a high school diploma* (or its equivalent), or who is *at least 19 years old but younger than 25*, is prohibited from taking a driver skills or road examination for a provisional license within three months from the date of issuance of the learner's permit or within nine months from the most recent date of conviction, or the granting of probation before judgment, for a moving violation. The learner's permit holder must also successfully complete an approved driver education program consisting of at least 30 hours of classroom instruction and at least 6 hours of highway driving instruction, as well as at least 60 hours of driving practice (including 10 hours of nighttime driving) supervised by a licensed driver who is 21 or older and has been licensed for three or more years. The individual must also submit a completed skills log book with the signatures of supervising drivers. The bill expands this provision to also apply to a homeless youth who is younger than 19; as a result (and assuming all other requirements are met), the waiting period is reduced from nine to three months for such an individual.

License Fee Exemption

The bill prohibits MVA from imposing a fee under § 16-112.2 of the Transportation Article, which generally requires an applicant to pay a fee for a license or a learner's permit, if a licensee or applicant is a homeless individual. However, a homeless individual is responsible for a fee for issuance of a duplicate license. MVA must adopt regulations to implement these requirements.

Vehicle Emissions Inspection Program Testing Exemption

Title 23, Subtitle 2 of the Transportation Article generally requires all model year 1977 and newer vehicles in the State to be inspected and tested every two years, unless specifically exempt. MVA and the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) must set the VEIP fee for each vehicle to be inspected and tested, which may not exceed \$30 through June 30, 2026. The current fee is \$30 but must be adjusted in future fiscal years to account for changes in the Consumer Price Index, as required by the Budget Reconciliation and Financing Act of 2025.

A vehicle owner must be granted a waiver from the VEIP inspection requirement if the vehicle fails to pass the exhaust emissions test but the owner provides specified evidence of payment for emissions-related repairs.

Persons with special disability registration plates, persons age 70 or older, and deployed military personnel are eligible for an exemption from the inspection requirement under specified circumstances (MVA/MDE regulations refer to these exemptions as “waivers”).

Any fire or rescue apparatus or ambulance owned or leased by a political subdivision of the State, or by a volunteer fire company, rescue squad, or volunteer ambulance company, registered as an emergency vehicle is exempt from VEIP inspections.

The bill expands these exemptions by establishing that a motor vehicle owned by a homeless individual at the time of a scheduled mandatory inspection is exempt from the mandatory inspections required if the exemption is not otherwise prohibited by federal law.

State Revenues:

Vital Records Fees

Revenues collected by MDH for vital records accrue to the general fund. Accordingly, by prohibiting MDH from collecting fees for copies of vital records for homeless individuals, the bill decreases general fund revenues collected by MDH; however, MDH advises, and the Department of Legislative Services concurs, that any such impact is likely negligible.

Motor Vehicle Related Fees

Although the exact number of individuals who may qualify for the fee exemptions established by the bill is unknown, the bill is anticipated to decrease VEIP revenues minimally beginning in fiscal 2027. The bill’s effect on other fee revenues (specifically for those related to driver’s licenses) is anticipated to be minimal.

Local Revenues: Local health department revenues may be affected by the bill’s change to vital record fees, although, similar to the impact discussed above for MDH, any such impact is anticipated to be negligible.

Additional Information

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

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Maryland Association of County Health Officers; Maryland Department of Health; Department of Housing and Community Development; Department of Human Services; Maryland Department of Transportation; Department of Legislative Services

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