

Department of Legislative Services  
Maryland General Assembly  
2026 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE  
Third Reader - Revised

House Bill 474

(Delegate Patterson, *et al.*)

Environment and Transportation

Judicial Proceedings

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Vehicle Laws - Dangerous Accumulations of Snow and Ice - Removal From  
Exposed Vehicle Surfaces (Clear Before You Drive Act)

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This bill prohibits a person from operating or towing a vehicle without first making reasonable efforts to remove any accumulated snow and ice that poses a threat to persons or property from “exposed vehicle surfaces.” However, this prohibition does not apply if compliance would (1) cause the operator of a vehicle to violate any workplace safety law or regulation or (2) threaten the operator’s health or safety. A police officer may enforce a violation of the prohibition only as a secondary offense, except when the violation contributes to an accident resulting in property damage, death, or serious bodily injury. Violations are subject to specified fines.

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Fiscal Summary

**State Effect:** Potential minimal increase in general fund revenues from fines imposed in the District Court. Enforcement can be handled with existing resources.

**Local Effect:** The bill is not anticipated to materially affect local government finances or operations.

**Small Business Effect:** Potential minimal.

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Analysis

**Bill Summary:** An “exposed vehicle surface” includes (1) a vehicle’s hood, trunk, windshield, windows, and roof; (2) the cab of a commercial or noncommercial truck; (3) the top of a trailer or semitrailer being towed by a motor vehicle; and (4) the top of a commercial trailer or semitrailer.

A violation of the bill's prohibition is a misdemeanor and subject to the fines listed below.

- Noncommercial vehicles: \$25 for a first offense, \$50 for a second offense, \$100 for a third offense, and \$200 for a fourth or subsequent offense.
- Commercial vehicles: \$75 for a first offense, \$150 for a second offense, \$300 for a third offense, \$600 for a fourth offense, and \$1,000 for a fifth or subsequent offense.
- Contributes to an accident that results in property damage or the death of or serious bodily injury to another person: \$200 to \$1,000 for a noncommercial vehicle and \$500 to \$1,500 for a commercial vehicle.

For violations that do not contribute to an accident resulting in property damage or death or serious bodily injury, each day that a violation occurs or continues constitutes a separate violation; however, a person may not be found in violation more than once in any 24-hour period.

**Current Law:** "Serious bodily injury" means an injury that creates a substantial risk of death or causes serious permanent or serious protracted (1) disfigurement; (2) loss of the function of any body part, organ, or mental faculty; or (3) impairment of the function of any body part or organ.

With specified exceptions, § 21-1104(c) of the Transportation Article prohibits driving a vehicle on a highway with any object, material, or obstruction located in or on the vehicle (or hanging from the rearview mirror) in such a way as to interfere with the clear view of the driver through the windshield. Similarly, subject to specified exceptions, § 21-1104(d) prohibits a person from driving a vehicle with any sign, poster, card, sticker, or other nontransparent material on the windshield, side wings, or side or rear windows of the vehicle. A person who violates either prohibition is guilty of a misdemeanor and is subject to a maximum fine of \$500.

The District Court prepayment penalties are \$110 for a violation of § 21-1104(c) and \$70 for a violation of § 21-1104(d), and the Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA) must assess one point against a violator's driver's license for either offense. If, however, a violation contributes to an accident, the prepayment penalties increase to \$150 and \$110, respectively, and MVA must assess three points against the violator's license.

Generally, violations of the Maryland Vehicle Law are subject to primary enforcement. Accordingly, a police officer may detain a driver for a suspected violation of most provisions of the Maryland Vehicle Law without having to first suspect a violation of another State law. However, § 21-1104(c) is among the provisions of the Maryland Vehicle Law that is subject only to secondary enforcement.

## **Additional Information**

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

**Cross File:** SB 698 (Senator McCray) - Judicial Proceedings.

**Information Source(s):** Judiciary (Administrative Office of the Courts); Department of State Police; Maryland Department of Transportation; Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - February 18, 2026  
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