



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

DEPARTMENT OF MOTOR VEHICLES

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Testimony of the Department of Motor Vehicles Commissioner Sibongile Magubane

Transportation Committee Public Hearing
March 8, 2021

Senate Bill 982 – AN ACT REVISING MOTOR VEHICLE STATUTES

Good morning Chairpersons Cassano and Lemar, Ranking Members Somers and Carney and distinguished members of the Transportation Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on Senate Bill 982, *An Act Revising Motor Vehicle Statutes*.

The Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) opposes certain sections of this bill and has indicated its specific objections below.

Section 1, lines 15-16

This proposed section relaxes the teen driving restrictions by permitting a newly licensed teen to transport a sibling to or from school within the first six months of licensure. As currently written, the law prohibits 16 and 17-year-old drivers from having any passengers in the vehicle for six months after obtaining a license except for a driving instructor, parents or legal guardian with a valid driver's license or a person providing instruction who is at least 20 years old and has held a license for at least 4 years with no suspensions during the last 4 years.

This proposal is counter to existing evidence regarding teen driver safety.

According to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, adding one more passenger with a teen driver results in a 19% increase in fatal crashes - adding two or more results in a 27% increase. Simply put, the more the passengers the greater the risk. The fact that the passenger is a sibling does not lower that risk, and relaxing the restriction imperils multiple members of the same family.

The current restrictions found in Section 14-36g of the Connecticut General Statutes are in place for a relatively short period of time, but these restrictions are essential for the safety of 16 and 17-year-olds, their family members and passengers and other users of the road.

Section 12, Lines 371 through 375

This proposed section mandates the commissioner to issue an identity card free of charge to any person who voluntarily surrenders an operator's license. The existing section of the statute already authorizes the commissioner to waive the fee for an identity card for a person who

voluntarily relinquishes a license, whose license has been refused for medical reasons, for a veteran who is blind and for a person residing in a homeless shelter. DMV already applies fee waivers to these designated categories of people, so it is unnecessary to change the language to make it mandatory. In fact, there are instances where fee waivers are not appropriate. A person with a lengthy suspension of his or her license may voluntarily choose to obtain an identity card, but there is no justification for waiving the fee under those circumstances. This would result in a loss of revenue to the state.

Section 18, Lines 696-727

This proposal changes the flashing light statute to enable volunteer ambulance personnel to use flashing blue lights instead of the currently designated green lights. Active members of a volunteer ambulance association or company have used green lights since 1974. It is unclear why they are seeking to change their light color, but this will have an impact on DMV resources. In 2015, the flashing light statute was rewritten, although the assigned colors did not change. After that, DMV made significant programming and procedural changes to conform to the rewritten statute, and it also made numerous form changes. This proposal will require DMV to again make conforming changes, and the proposal will have a fiscal impact on the agency.

Section 19

- **Line 940**

The proposal would give the commissioner the authority to allow drivers' schools and secondary schools with driver's education programs to administer on-the-road skills tests to their students. The DMV believes it is a conflict of interest for driving schools to be testing their own students. They have a stake in the outcome of the exam that may affect the objectivity of the tester. The DMV would have no way to oversee or monitor the tests administered by the schools.

- **Lines 975, 976 and 1010**

This proposal would add Vietnamese and Albanian to the languages in which the written driver's test must be given. The current requirements in state law, which DMV follows, include testing in any language spoken at home by at least one per cent of the state's population, according to statistics prepared by the United States Census Bureau, based on the most recent decennial census. In addition, DMV follows the Department of Justice LEP guidelines under Title VI. The Connecticut law and the DOJ guidelines offer reasonable criteria, driven by population and need, that can be implemented in a sustainable way given that adding languages to DMV's test bank is costly. Adding languages to the statute one by one is arbitrary and inefficient.

Section 22, Lines 1149-1160

This proposal would allow drivers' schools to employ prospective driving instructors before they were licensed by DMV, provided they had a background check done by the employer. As part of the licensing process, DMV conducts fingerprint-based background checks. Third party background checks often do not reveal older offenses and are not as accurate as fingerprint-based checks.

Several years ago, a similar arrangement was made for people obtaining an "F" endorsement to drive taxi and livery vehicles. However, the DMV has consistently opposed any efforts to make

this arrangement applicable to school bus drivers. Similarly, driving school instructors are also interacting with minors, and extreme caution is warranted when screening these instructors. For those reasons, DMV does not support this proposal.

Section 26, Lines 1348-1367

This section requires DMV to “study compliance with the laws regarding the sale and repair of fire apparatus in the state.” Upon closer examination of the language, it appears that DMV is simply being asked to provide information that it would have available in its records. For example, part of the study would require DMV to review “the number of times in the last five years that the commissioner imposed a civil penalty pursuant to section 14-51a of the general statutes or conducted investigations and held hearings pursuant to section 14-65k of the general statutes with regards to the sale or repair of fire apparatus.” These are the type of requests typically made under FOIA, and it is unclear how facts such as these could be “studied.”

If there are allegations that unlicensed persons are repairing or reselling apparatus, the DMV has a system for accepting and investigating complaints regarding illegal dealer and repairer activity. Using DMV resources to conduct a study in this area is wasteful and unnecessary.

Thank you for the opportunity to express our concerns with the specific sections of SB-982 outlined above.