



## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Attorney General Frosh Applauds Passage of Bill Prohibiting Fee-Based Driver's License Suspensions**

**BALTIMORE, MD (March 20, 2020)** – Maryland Attorney General Brian E. Frosh today applauded the Maryland General Assembly on the passage of important legislation sponsored and supported by the Office of Attorney General prohibiting driver's license suspensions for failure to pay Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA) fines and fees (HB280/SB234). Nationwide, 11 million driver's licenses are suspended for unpaid fines and fees.

According to MVA data, more than 29,000 Maryland residents had their driver's licenses suspended for failure to pay fines between 2015 and 2019. Maryland has lagged behind other states in addressing fee-based driver's license suspension. In the last two years, Montana, Texas, Virginia, Mississippi, California, Idaho, Maine, and the District of Columbia adopted reforms related to fee-based license suspensions. Specifically, the Maryland legislation:

- repeals MVA's authority to suspend an individual's driver's license merely because they cannot afford to pay a fine or fee;
- eliminates the requirement that individuals on an installment plan pay at least 10% of the debt per month;
- reduces from \$300 to \$150 the amount of debt necessary to qualify for a payment plan;
- eliminates the MVA's ability to suspend a judgment debtor's driver's license at the request of a judgment creditor; and,
- applies retroactively to current license suspensions for failures to pay.

"The members of the General Assembly did a great job in a short session prioritizing legislation that protects Marylanders," said Attorney General Frosh. "Our bill to stop driver's license suspensions for unpaid fines was foremost among them. In Maryland, tens of thousands of people have lost the privilege to drive due to fee-based driver's license suspensions. We should not penalize Marylanders for being poor - limiting their ability to get to work, to doctor's appointments, or pick children up from school. Working with advocates and members of the General Assembly, we were able to restore the right to work for many Marylanders and end a policy that disproportionately impacted people of color and of lower income."

Attorney General Frosh appreciated the work of the many advocates who worked to help secure the passage of the legislation including the Job Opportunities Task Force, the Maryland Consumer Rights Coalition, the Baltimore Ravens, the University of Baltimore School of Law's Legal Data and Design Clinic, and many others. The Attorney General also thanked Senate President Bill Ferguson, House Speaker Adrienne Jones, Senate Judicial Proceedings Chairman

Will Smith, Senator Chris West, and in particular, Delegate Brooke Lierman for their sponsorship of the legislation.