



Department of the Secretary of State Bureau of Motor Vehicles

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JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

L.D. 1616 “An Act to Eliminate Requirements for Drivers to Surrender Their Physical Driver’s Licenses During a Temporary Suspension”

Testimony of Shenna Bellows, Secretary of State and
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Senator Nangle, Representative Crafts, Members of the Transportation Committee, I am honored to provide testimony in support of L.D. 1616 “An Act to Eliminate Requirements for Drivers to Surrender Their Physical Driver’s Licenses During a Temporary Suspension” and to provide you with information that may be useful to you.

As we sit here today, the truest version of each of our driver licenses is the digital version that exists within the licensing system at BMV. The physical card that we each possess in our wallets, is a reflection of our license status when it was issued...days, months or often, years ago. It is not, nor should it be, considered an accurate, up-to-the moment reflection of every individual’s driving privilege. In the modern era, due to advancements in electronic records and real-time roadside technology, our law enforcement officers have the ability to validate a driving privilege electronically from their vehicles.

Our physical license, however, is also a reflection of our officially validated identity. And regardless of the current status of our driving privilege, we still require easy access to our identity cards for everyday tasks. Picking up a prescription, checking into a hotel, visiting a bank, and—as we’re all seeing now—flying or entering a federal facility all require us to prove our identity using some form of government-issued photo ID.

With these modern realities in mind, this bill aims to align a number of passages in both Title 29-A and Title 17-A to ensure Mainers can retain access to their identity cards, regardless of the status of their driving privilege. The requirements to seize and return a temporarily-suspended license are incredibly difficult to consistently enforce, and add an extra burden upon our officers and court officials as well. To be clear, we have intentionally not altered passages in either title related to a revoked license, as a result of this distinction.

Still, BMV currently holds over 1,500 suspended licenses in a cabinet at the administrative building, out of the roughly 15,000+ suspensions in play on any given day. Many of those 1,500+ drivers found themselves without an identity document when their licenses were seized for a temporary suspension; many of them waited for a period of weeks to see their state ID come in through the mail, if they chose to

pursue one. Upon reinstatement, BMV staff also need to reference that cabinet to determine if a license should be mailed back to the driver, using taxpayer-funded postage.

L.D. 1616 reflects the reality of 21st-century administration without limiting the ability of law enforcement or our courts to keep our roads safe. I respectfully urge the Committee to support its passage. If the committee has any questions, I'd be more than happy to answer them or conduct the appropriate research for the work session.