

Support SB 506 / HB 292: Driver Education Requirements **Reduce Barriers to Driver's Licensing for Working Adults**

The Challenge: The Nation's Highest Licensing Barriers

- Maryland is the only state in the nation that requires new drivers of all ages to complete identical driver's education and practice requirements.
- New drivers must complete 36 hours of classroom education, 60 hours of supervised practice, and fulfill a 9-month waiting period before being eligible for a license.
- Finding the time to complete the requirements, a friend or relative to supervise driving hours, and the costly driver's education course can be major barriers for low-wage workers.
- Studies show that young drivers represent the largest group of beginners and have the highest rate of auto accidents – not adults over the age of 25. The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety recommends stricter licensing laws for young drivers, but applying the same steep barriers to adults is not essential for a strong, safety-oriented law.

The Consequence: Employment Challenges for Working Adults

- These high barriers have the unintended consequence of making driver's licenses less accessible to adults seeking a license to facilitate employment.
- Access to certain jobs is difficult or impossible without a license. Employers in industries like construction have a strong preference for applicants who can get themselves reliably to the worksite and who can drive company vehicles while on the clock. Some employers require proof of a valid license as a condition of employment.
- The inability to drive limits the job market for un- and under-employed workers, who can only apply for jobs within reach of public transit.

The Solution: Tailor Licensing Laws to Suit Needs of Teens vs. Adults

- Maintain current law for young drivers, but make the following amendments for adults 18 and over:
 - Eliminate the 60-hour supervised practice rule
 - Reduce the time for holding a learner's permit to 45 days
- These provisions provide flexibility and facilitate timely licensing for working adults, while maintaining safety standards.
- These changes will strengthen the state economy by eliminating obstacles for adults who need a license to access jobs, transport their families and manage household responsibilities.
- Passing this legislation brings Maryland in line with other states – maintaining safety while reducing barriers to economic success by tailoring licensing laws more appropriately to different age groups.