

Date of Hearing: April 11, 2016

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Jim Frazier, Chair

AB 2322 (Chu) – As Introduced February 18, 2016

SUBJECT: Vehicles: instruction permits: decals

SUMMARY: Requires the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) to provide the recipient of a driver's instruction permit with a removable and transferrable decal that reads "student driver" and authorizes the holder of the permit to display the decal on the side or rear window of the vehicle when driving.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Authorizes DMV to issue an instruction permit to operate a motor vehicle subject to certain limitations to a person 15 years and 6 months of age or older.
- 2) Authorizes DMV to issue a provisional driver's license to a person at least 16 years of age but under 18 years of age who has held an instruction permit for not less than 6 months and has completed 6 hours of behind-the-wheel training and an additional 50 hours of supervised driving practice.
- 3) Prohibits a person from driving a motor vehicle with any object or material placed, displayed, installed, affixed, or applied upon the windshield or side or rear windows, except under certain conditions.

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS: Under existing law, a person at least 15 years and 6 months of age may apply for, and be issued a driver's instruction permit. With this permit, the person may only drive a motor vehicle when accompanied by a person over the age of 18 who has a valid California driver's license and is riding in the passenger seat. The driver with the instruction permit must complete 6 hours of behind-the-wheel driver training and an additional 50 hours of supervised driving practice before being issued a provisional driver's license.

This bill would require DMV to provide the recipient of an instruction permit with a removable and transferrable decal that reads "student driver" when issuing the permit. The student driver may then display the decal on the side or rear windows of the vehicle that they are driving in order to alert other drivers on the road that the vehicle is being driven by a student driver.

This bill is intended to alleviate the hazardous situations novice drivers find themselves in when first learning to drive. The author states that teen drivers are more of a risk of an accident than older drivers because they tend to underestimate or not recognize dangerous situations. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2,163 teens ages 16-19 were killed in motor vehicle crashes in the United States in 2013, and 243,243 were treated for injuries. The author intends that, by alerting other motorists to a novice driver's presence, the student driver decals created by this bill will encourage other drivers to give the novice driver more space and treat them with greater deference. This will in turn encourage student drivers to feel more

comfortable and make the state's roadways safer by reducing the number of dangerous situations that result in fatalities and injuries.

The author also cites a New Jersey law that requires a person who has been issued a provisional driver's license to affix a decal to the rear license plate of the vehicle being driven to alert the authorities and others that the driver was a novice. Although that law was criticized for potentially allowing law enforcement to target vehicles bearing a decal, a 2014 study conducted by the American Journal of Preventative Medicine found that road crashes among teen drivers decreased by 9.5% in the law's first two years of implementation.

It is unknown if AB 2322 will have a similar effect in California. The New Jersey law applied to people with a provisional driver's license, who would not be included in this bill. While New Jersey provisional driver's license holders benefited from displaying decals, those drivers were also not subject to the same restrictions that instruction permit holders in California have, namely being prohibited from driving at all without an older licensed driver in the vehicle. While decals might help a young driver keep space between other vehicles on the road while driving alone or deter them from unlawfully driving with other young passengers in the vehicle, it is unknown if there will be a material benefit to allowing drivers who are already supervised by a parent or driving instructor to display the same type of information. No data on crashes or incidents involving instruction permit holders in California is readily available. However, if the decal program established by this bill were successful, it would likely be evidenced by a decrease in traffic accidents involving people who have been issued an instruction driving permit.

Because drivers with an instruction driving permit would not be required to display the decals, it is unknown how widespread the practice of displaying the decals would become. However, requiring the decals would likely raise similar concerns to those raised in New Jersey relating to privacy and fear of being targeted by law enforcement.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

None on file

Opposition

None on file

Analysis Prepared by: Justin Behrens / TRANS. / (916) 319-2093