

Date of Hearing: April 25, 2022

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Laura Friedman, Chair

AB 2510 (Bennett) – As Amended March 17, 2022

SUBJECT: Vehicles: driver's licenses

SUMMARY: Waives the driver's license (DL) fee for a person who can verify their status as homeless. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Waives the DL fee for a homeless person, as defined.
- 2) Defines "homeless person" the same as a homeless person under the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, which includes the following:
 - a) An individual or family who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.
 - b) An individual or family with a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, including a car, park, abandoned building, bus or train station, airport, or camping ground.
 - c) An individual or family living in a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangements (including hotels and motels paid for by Federal, State, or local government programs for low-income individuals or by charitable organizations, congregate shelters, and transitional housing.
- 3) Provides that a homeless service provider that has knowledge of the person's housing status may verify the person's status as homeless.
- 4) Defines a homeless service provider to include a governmental or nonprofit agency receiving government funding to provide homeless services, a California licensed attorney, a local educational agency liaison for homeless children and youth, a public social services provider, a law enforcement officer with certain designations, or any other homeless services provider the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) determines to have eligibility.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Waives the identification card (ID card) fee for unhoused persons.
- 2) Authorizes DMV to issue an ID card to any person who provides their true full name, correct age, and any other identifying data as required by DMV.
- 3) Provides that every application for an ID card be signed and verified by the applicant, as specified, and requires the applicant to provide a legible thumb or finger print.
- 4) Allows any person 62 years of age or older, to apply for and receive an ID card bearing the notation "Senior Citizen" if specific requirements are met.
- 5) Establishes a \$26 fee to be paid to DMV for the issuance of an ID card, adjusted for inflation.

- 6) Specifies that the issuance of an original or replacement ID card for a senior citizen shall be issued free of charge.

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS: AB 1733 (Quirk Silva), Chapter 764, Statutes of 2014, created a process for DMV to waive the fee for an ID card for homeless individuals. The rationale given at the time for the fee waiver was because “many people experiencing homelessness lack the necessary forms of personal identification needed to establish their eligibility for various public assistance and social programs. The most common forms of ID that people need in order to access these programs are birth records and a valid, government-issued photo ID.”

In 2019 DMV issued 137,888 ID cards for unhoused individuals. In 2020 they issued 75,314 IDs, and in 2021 they issued 100,721. While unhoused individuals can get ID cards for free, they cannot get the same fee waivers for DLs.

According to the author, “It is important that individuals who are experiencing homelessness are protected and have resources to guide them toward stability. They deserve access to the same resources and opportunities that they would have if they weren’t homeless. This includes access to an updated driver’s license, which if it were expired, could result in accrued parking violations and unaffordable car towing fees. Safe Parking Santa Barbara has made significant progress in helping individuals avoid violations and towing fees by giving them a safe place to park their cars overnight. AB 2510 aims to further support homeless individuals by waiving the fees associated with renewing a driver’s license. Having a current driver’s license would allow these individuals to apply for jobs and take the steps necessary to improve their lives.”

ID and DL cards are especially important for unhoused individuals. According to a survey from the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty (NLCHP), in a given month in 2004, 54% of homeless people without photo ID were denied access to shelters or housing services, 53% were denied food stamps, and 45% were denied access to Medicaid or other medical services.

According to the Legislative Analysis Office, California has a disproportionately large homeless population. Over 151,000 Californians are estimated to be homeless. According to the Homeless Policy Research Institute, 27% of the national homeless population is in California. 72% of those who are homeless in California are also unsheltered, the highest share of unsheltered homeless of any state. In fact, half of the people experiencing unsheltered homelessness reside in California.

A recent survey by NLCHP, which tracks policies in 187 cities, found the number of prohibitions against vehicle residency has more than doubled during the last decade. "Much like outdoor camping and sleeping bans, city-wide restrictions on living in vehicles may leave no lawful place where homeless people may live in a community," NLCHP stated. "Bans that permit vehicle impoundment, or that result in impoundment flowing from unpaid tickets or other enforcement of such bans, can cause homeless people to lose their shelter, transportation, and personal belongings in one fell swoop – with no realistic option to retrieve or replace them... While not a long-term solution, many homeless advocates are urging cities to start more seriously thinking

about safe parking programs – in which certain lots are designated for people living out of their cars – as vehicular homelessness continues to climb.”

In Los Angeles County alone, there are over 16,000 people living in their vehicles each night, representing 25% of people experiencing homelessness. Parking restrictions and city ordinances prohibiting people from sleeping in cars can often make living in a car an expensive endeavor. Cities like Los Angeles have created something called “Safe Parking Programs,” which provide parking lots for the unhoused to sleep in to avoid hefty fines or even tows that the city may enforce for parking in the wrong place.

Many of these Safe Parking Program lots require someone to have a valid DL. While \$38 may not be a lot of money for many people, it is nearly one-fourth of the monthly allowance the state provides to a single low income individual under CalFresh benefits for food.

Having identification is also key to accessing public benefits. Programs such as Medi-Cal, CalFresh, CalWORKs, SSI, and other programs critical for extremely low income Californians all require identification as part of the application and eligibility determination process. While individuals can currently get an identification card for this purpose, a DL is far more useful since it opens the doors to employment opportunities that often require a valid license or which involves driving for the employer.

Committee comments: The Motor Vehicle Account (MVA), the primary funding source for DMV, remains structurally imbalanced. Although the MVA is projected to have a positive fund balance through the next five fiscal years, in 2023-24, 2024-25, 2025-26, and 2027-27, expenditures are anticipated to outpace revenues, reducing the fund balance from \$693 million in 2022-23 to \$120 million in 2026-27. The structural imbalance remains even though all future DMV and CHP capital outlay costs are being shifted away from the MVA to the General Fund in an attempt to keep the fund solvent.

Related Legislation:

AB 1685 (Bryan) of 2022 requires processing agencies to forgive at least \$1,500 in parking tickets for individuals who are verified to be homeless. That bill is pending before Assembly Housing and Community Development Committee.

AB 2775 (Quirk-Silva) of 2022 specifies that a person who verifies they are homeless with the DMV does not have to pay vehicle registration fees on an automobile or a recreational vehicle. That bill is pending before this committee.

Previous Legislation:

AB 1733 (Quirk Silva), Chapter 764, Statutes of 2014, created a process for DMV to waive the fee for an ID card for homeless individuals.

AB 771 (Bennett) of 2021 was substantially similar to this bill. That bill was held on suspense in Assembly Appropriations Committee.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

None on file

Opposition

None on file

Analysis Prepared by: David Sforza / TRANS. / (916) 319-2093