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## Senate of Pennsylvania

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September 9, 2019

Secretary Leslie Richards  
Pennsylvania Department of Transportation  
Keystone Building  
400 North St., Fifth Floor  
Harrisburg, PA 17120

**RE: REAL ID Feedback and Suggestions**

Dear Secretary Richards:

I would like to thank you and your department for the tireless work you have undertaken as Pennsylvania has begun the process of complying with the federal REAL ID law. I understand it hasn't always been easy, but I want you to know that you have a partner in me. I firmly believe that it is our imperative to work closely together to ensure Pennsylvania's compliance with this law and improve the safety of our commercial flights and federal and military facilities, while making concerted efforts to avoid placing undue burdens on the citizens of our Commonwealth. My staff and I have heard from dozens of constituents – primarily seniors – with questions and complaints about this new law and its implementation. As the Democratic Chair of the Senate Aging & Youth Committee, I wanted to share the most common concerns that have been reported to us and my proposed solutions.

### **1. Exact Name Matches Across Documentation**

The most frequent complaint we hear from constituents is from those who were turned away at the DMV because one or more of their documents didn't have an exact name match. In many cases, the appearance or absence of a middle name or initial on a given document was the issue. Many seniors' birth certificates do not include a middle name or initial, but their social security card and/or driver's license may. In these situations, they are told to request a court order to have the name on their social security card updated or go to the Department of Health in the respective state where they were born and submit for a correction to their birth certificate. To make matters worse, this information is only relayed to them after they have waited in long lines at the DMV to apply for the REAL ID.

Based on the information provided to me and my staff, the middle name match requirement seems somewhat arbitrary. For example, if there is no middle name listed on any of the individual's proof documents, that individual would be eligible for a REAL ID. However, if the next individual in line has a middle name on their birth certificate, but not their supporting documents, they would be denied simply because a middle name shows up on their source document.

*Ideally, we would like to see the exact middle name match requirement eliminated. We were unable to find language that mandates the exact middle name match. In the event this requirement cannot be changed, we would suggest better marketing to alert people about this requirement and how to address it PRIOR to them making a trip to the DMV, bearing in mind that many of them are not web-savvy.*

## **2. Proof of Name Change Documentation**

Individuals who are married or have been married are required to show proof of all legal name changes. This policy disproportionately impacts women and same-sex married couples, and places an undue burden on them to secure marriage certificates and divorce decrees. Older and out-of-state documents are the hardest to secure, so senior women are the most affected.

*I understand the necessity behind validating the authenticity of these name changes. However, we need to explore ways to make it easier for individuals to obtain these documents or consider waivers or alternate forms of proof while maintaining security standards. If there are legislative constraints to making these changes, please let us know and we'd be happy to help.*

## **3. Long Wait Times**

Most constituents with whom I've spoken have reported wait times in excess of 2 or 3 hours. For some, this was shrugged off as simply an inconvenience, but for others, particularly low-wage earners, seniors on a fixed income and individuals with disabilities, these excessive wait times pose undue physical and financial hardship and need to be viewed with a degree of priority.

*Extended and weekend hours and increased staffing at DMV locations, particularly at high-volume locations and in the months immediately leading up to the October, 2020 compliance deadline, would be a good start. Another option might be adding designated kiosks for in-person pre-verification of documents. The majority of Pennsylvanians obtained their driver's licenses before 2003 and are not eligible to pre-verify their documents online. We need a simpler, more efficient solution for them to pre-verify their documents in person, which will ultimately speed up the application process for everyone.*

## **4. Cost**

The collective cost of obtaining a REAL ID – the \$30 application fee on top of the \$30.50 renewal fee, the transportation expenses (gas for those who drive, public transit/ride-share services for those who don't), the potential lost wages – create very real barriers for economically insecure people. Low-wage earners and seniors are the hardest hit.

*I have introduced legislation (SB 855) to help reduce the application fee for our seniors. The ancillary costs can best be addressed by addressing the wait times.*

## **5. General Misinformation about REAL ID Process and Processing Centers**

With any new law or policy, one of the biggest challenges can simply be communicating the message to the public. PennDOT has done an admirable job of trying to disseminate information. I was fortunate to participate in a REAL ID presentation with a PennDOT representative at Gwynedd Estates recently, and I know the seniors there were overwhelmingly appreciative.

My office distributes pamphlets at our weekly senior community visits and other outreach events, and answers questions as best we can. I know my staff works closely with our PennDOT liaisons to educate

and assist our constituents and we are greatly appreciative for this partnership. However, we have noticed a common set of questions derived from misinformation about the law that I'd like to bring to your attention:

- Do I *need* to get one?
- Will I need it to drive?
- Can I keep my PA Driver's License?
- Where is my closest location?
- Do they accept card payments?

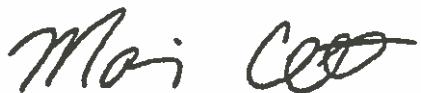
While my staff and I can answer many of these questions in the moment, they serve to highlight the larger point that there is still a lot of confusion and misunderstanding surrounding REAL ID. Again, this is especially true among our seniors. I would also mention that it is nearly impossible for the general public to ascertain whether a specific DMV accepts credit/debit cards. Even my staff has had a hard time obtaining this information.

*Regarding the processing of payments, I would like to see all PennDOT facilities ultimately updated to include credit/debit card processing equipment. This will make the experience for PennDOT and the constituents easier and more efficient. It would also eliminate any money order fees that might be incurred for individuals forced to currently pursue this method of payment.*

*In the meantime, it would be incredibly helpful if PennDOT made its web interface more user-friendly and prominently posted online which of their locations (1) process REAL ID applications and (2) accept card payments. While the website allows you to search same-day REAL ID processing locations, searching for DMV locations that process REAL IDs is still a convoluted process. And neither search includes the payment options along with the locations. Again, navigating PennDOT's website is especially burdensome for our seniors.*

My staff and I will continue to educate and inform our constituents about REAL ID and look forward to a long and productive partnership with PennDOT as we serve our constituents. Again, it is my sincere belief that by working together, we can enact a few creative solutions to benefit the hardworking people of this great Commonwealth. I am committed to supporting you in these efforts in any way that I can, and appreciate you taking the time to consider my feedback and suggestions.

Sincerely,



Senator Maria Collett  
State Senator, 12<sup>th</sup> District  
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

cc: Governor Tom Wolf