

SENATE, No. 665

STATE OF NEW JERSEY 220th LEGISLATURE

PRE-FILED FOR INTRODUCTION IN THE 2022 SESSION

Sponsored by:

Senator STEVEN V. OROHO

District 24 (Morris, Sussex and Warren)

Senator LINDA R. GREENSTEIN

District 14 (Mercer and Middlesex)

Co-Sponsored by:

Senators Pou, O'Scanlon and Diegnan

SYNOPSIS

Requires MVC to place notation on vehicle's registration certificate indicating registrant is deaf.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

Introduced Pending Technical Review by Legislative Counsel.



1 AN ACT concerning notations on vehicle registration certificates
2 indicating the registrant is deaf and supplementing chapter 3 of
3 Title 39 of the New Jersey Statutes.

4
5 **BE IT ENACTED** by the Senate and General Assembly of the State
6 of New Jersey:

7
8 1. Upon application by any person with a hearing loss of a pure
9 tone average of 41 dB or greater, verified by an
10 otorhinolaryngologist (ENT) or an audiologist clinically certified by
11 the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, the Chief
12 Administrator of the New Jersey Motor Vehicle Commission shall
13 issue to the applicant a special registration certificate bearing the
14 international symbol for deafness or a numerical code designating
15 deafness, whichever shall be specified by the applicant. The
16 deafness designation shall only be placed on the special registration
17 certificate and renewal of such designation shall be done during
18 renewal of a motor vehicle registration. The design of the special
19 registration certificate shall be approved by the Chief Administrator
20 of the New Jersey Motor Vehicle Commission. No fee over and
21 above the required fee for a registration certificate shall be imposed
22 for the special registration certificate.

23
24 2. This act shall take effect on the 180th day after enactment
25 and shall apply to motor vehicle registration certificates issued or
26 renewed on or after this date.

27
28
29 STATEMENT

30
31 This bill would require the Chief Administrator of the New
32 Jersey Motor Vehicle Commission to place a notation on a vehicle's
33 registration certificate indicating the registrant is deaf. This
34 notation would be placed on the certificate provided the applicant
35 has a hearing loss of 41 decibels or greater. As part of the
36 application process, an otorhinolaryngologist (ENT) or an
37 audiologist clinically certified by the American Speech-Language-
38 Hearing Association is required to verify the applicant's hearing
39 ability. Upon approval, the Chief Administrator is required to issue
40 the applicant a special registration certificate with the international
41 symbol for deafness or a numerical code designating deafness,
42 whichever the applicant prefers. No additional fees will be assessed
43 for applicants who seek a special registration certificate.

44 For individuals who are deaf, communicating with law
45 enforcement can be a challenge. An officer may not understand
46 what the individual is trying to say or misinterpret any movements
47 or gestures as a sign of aggression and respond with force.

1 Incidents of this nature highlight the extent to which officer training
2 fails to prepare graduates for interactions with the deaf community.

3 Many members of law enforcement receive limited training and
4 resources to help them communicate with the deaf community.
5 Some departments dedicate more time instructing trainees on urgent
6 matters such as use of force, firearms, driving, and first aid. Other
7 departments find they lack the financial resources to ensure officers
8 can access interpreters and translation equipment.

9 Here in New Jersey, local law enforcement is attempting to break
10 down communication barriers by participating in panel discussions
11 with members of the deaf community. These discussions allow
12 individuals who are deaf to ask questions in a non-adversarial
13 setting and provide suggestions for what officers can do during
14 traffic stops to ensure a deaf driver can better understand an
15 officer's instructions. Under New Jersey law, those who are deaf or
16 hard of hearing may apply to receive a deaf or hard of hearing
17 designation on their driver's license. The sponsor believes that
18 placing a notation on a vehicle's registration certificate is one step
19 towards improving how members of law enforcement communicate
20 with motorists during routine traffic stops and prevent future
21 tragedies that may occur as the result of a misunderstanding.