

Date of Hearing: April 14, 2021

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Lorena Gonzalez, Chair

AB 771 (Bennett) – As Introduced February 16, 2021

Policy Committee: Transportation Vote: 15 - 0

Urgency: No State Mandated Local Program: No Reimbursable: >

SUMMARY:

This bill prohibits the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) from charging a driver's license renewal to any person who can verify their status as a homeless person, pursuant to regulations to be adopted by DMV.

FISCAL EFFECT:

Cost to DMV. Minor revenue loss. Regulatory costs. Programming costs.

COMMENTS:

Background and Purpose. California has had, and continues to have, a substantial population of homeless persons. According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD's) annual point-in-time homelessness count, California has more people experiencing homelessness than any other American state. As of January 2019, California had more than 151,000 individuals experiencing homelessness, which represented about 27% of the total homeless population in the nation.

DMV charges a standard fee of \$X for issuance of new ID card and \$Y for renewal of an ID card. In 2014, the Legislature passed AB 1733 (Quirk Silva) (Chapter 764, Statutes of 2014), which prohibited DMV from charging a fee for a new or renewed identification card to a person who demonstrates they are experiencing homelessness, pursuant to regulations the bill directed DMV to develop. The bill was in recognition that possession of government-issued ID is oftentimes required for a person to receive vital services, including government services. DMV reports it has issued 133,194 free ID cards to homeless individuals since fiscal year 2018-2019 DMV.

This bill follows the same reasoning as 2014's AB 1733, but applies it to driver's license fees. As the bill's sponsor—the Western Center on Law and Poverty—notes, possession of a valid driver's license, and the ability to drive legally, is oftentimes necessary to securing employment, housing and other vital necessities of life. In addition, many localities have developed safe parking programs that allow individuals experiencing homelessness to legally sleep in their cars in designated locations, and access to these locations oftentimes requires possession of a valid driver's license. Requiring DMV to waive driver's license fees for homeless individuals may lessen the considerable burden many of these individuals carry.

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