

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: No

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:

One-time costs to DMV, likely in excess of \$150,000, to make programmatic and information technology changes to implement the bill. Ongoing revenue loss of an unknown, but potentially significant amount, to the extent individuals experiencing homelessness renew their driver's licenses without paying the \$38 fee. If 50,000 individuals renewed their driver's licenses in a given year without paying DMV's \$38 fee, consistent with this bill, DMV would forgo revenue to cover its associated administrative costs of \$1.9 million. (DMV reports it waived the \$33 ID card fee for 133,194 individuals in fiscal year 2018-19 and 107,420 individuals in fiscal year 2019-20, consistent with existing law.)

COMMENTS:

Background and Purpose. California has had, and continues to have, a substantial population of unhoused 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 \$33 for issuance or renewal of an ID card, with discounts available to those 62 years and older and to those whose income falls below a certain level. 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 recognized possession of government-issued ID is oftentimes required for a person to receive vital services, including government services.

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 for 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.

Analysis Prepared by: Jay Dickenson / APPR. / (916) 319-2081