

Bill would require proof of legal status for Md. driver's license

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ANNAPOLIS -- A local state senator is trying for the third year in a row to require that Maryland drivers prove they are in the country legally.

Sen. David Brinkley, a Republican who represents [Frederick](#) and Carroll counties, testified before the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee on Wednesday. He is one of three state lawmakers sponsoring such legislation this year.

The bill would require people to show proof of their immigration status before they could obtain a license. Forty-six states and the District of Columbia have such a requirement.

"We have to get Maryland to the place where our documents have integrity," Brinkley said.

Maryland Secretary of Transportation John Porcari also testified in support of the bill.

The measure could have an increased impact in [Frederick](#) County when combined with a local program to check the immigration status of anyone arrested in the county.

That was the concern of [Walkersville](#) resident Tony Naranjo, who testified at the hearing on behalf of two friends he met at church.

The couple have lived in the U.S. for 15 years, when they came to visit relatives and decided they wanted to raise a family in [Frederick](#) County. Naranjo declined to identify the couple for fear they would be deported. Naranjo said they paid a man \$8,000 to help them obtain legal status, but later found out he was not a lawyer. The man took their money without doing the job he was paid to do.

He has since fled the country and is sought by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Naranjo said.

The couple own a business and are raising their children.

Without a driver's license, they fear their family will be split apart, Naranjo said. The [Frederick](#) County Sheriff's Office is working with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement to check the immigration status of people who are detained, sometimes for traffic stops.

"(The couple) are not asking for a handout or charity like so many in their position have been pictured," Naranjo said in his testimony. "They are only asking for a helping hand in realizing the rest of their dreams."

The argument did not convince Brinkley, who said people should go through the legal process if they want to live in the country.

It is up to the federal government to develop policies and determine how people obtain legal status, he said.

"We're fed up with Maryland being a sanctuary state when it comes to these individuals."

John T. Kuo, administrator of the Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration, said he thinks a legal presence requirement is important to prevent fraud.

He thinks many people in the country have obtained Maryland licenses illegally, but do not live in the

state.

A toll-free number set up to grant licenses to noncitizens received 1 million calls from all over the country, particularly up and down the East Coast, he said.

Sen. Alex Mooney, a Republican who represents [Frederick](#) and Washington counties and sits on the Judicial Proceedings Committee, supports the requirement. He thinks a bill requiring legal presence will pass this year. But it may leave loopholes, depending on how regulations are written, he said.

"It'll probably pass, but the question is will the effect be what the supporters of the bill want to happen?"