
OLR Bill Analysis

sHB 7161

AN ACT CONCERNING THE SUSPENSION OF MOTOR VEHICLE OPERATORS' LICENSES FOR FAILURE TO PAY FINES OR FAILURE TO APPEAR FOR A SCHEDULED COURT APPEARANCE AND PAYMENT INSTALLMENT PLANS FOR MOTOR VEHICLE INFRACTIONS AND VIOLATIONS.

SUMMARY

This bill generally prohibits the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) commissioner from suspending a person's driver's license for only one or both of the following reasons:

1. failure to pay a fine, fee, or charge associated with a motor vehicle-related infraction or violation processed through the Superior Court's Centralized Infractions Bureau (CIB; see BACKGROUND), or
2. failure to appear for a scheduled court appearance related to these infractions and violations.

The bill's suspension prohibition for failure to pay or appear does not apply to certain infractions or violations it deems "moving violations." Additionally, specifically for failure to pay, the prohibition does not apply if (1) the motor-vehicle related infraction or violation conviction is a person's third within three years or (2) a person fails, for the third time, to make a timely installment plan payment through CIB for one of these infractions or violations, as the bill permits. The bill requires the Judicial Department to publish information about these payment plans' availability on its website.

The bill also requires the DMV commissioner, in conjunction with CIB, to develop and conduct an awareness campaign educating the public about the (1) importance of timely responding to motor vehicle infractions and violations, and how to do so; (2) consequences of not

paying related fines, fees, or costs, or failing to appear for a scheduled court date; and (3) availability of installment payment plans.

Lastly, the bill makes various minor, technical, and conforming changes.

EFFECTIVE DATE: January 1, 2026

DRIVER'S LICENSE SUSPENSION PROCEDURE

Current law gives the DMV commissioner broad authority to suspend or revoke a driver's license for any cause he deems sufficient. It also establishes a license suspension procedure requiring the court to notify the commissioner when someone:

1. is arrested for a violation of any motor vehicle-related statute and willfully fails to appear for a scheduled court appearance;
2. is charged with a motor-vehicle related infraction or violation processed through CIB (or certain other violations) and fails to pay the related fine and any additional fees, or plead not guilty, by the required date or willfully fails to comply with court-set remote events and deadlines or appear for a scheduled court appearance; or
3. fails to pay certain related additional surcharges, fees, and costs (such as the 50% surcharge for the Special Transportation Fund that applies to most motor vehicle-related fines, penalties, or charges).

Under current practice, DMV then suspends the person's license. The bill prohibits these suspensions solely for failing to pay or appear in relation to motor vehicle-related infractions or violations processed through CIB, with certain exceptions. (It does not prohibit suspension for other reasons; state law allows or requires suspension for many specified driving-related and non-driving violations.)

CIB INSTALLMENT PAYMENT PLANS

The bill (1) allows anyone charged with a motor vehicle-related

infraction or violation processed through CIB to pay under a 12-month installment plan, if the fine's total amount (including any additional fees or costs) is at least \$150 and (2) requires CIB to provide this option on its website. It allows CIB to assess an additional fee of up to \$15 to cover related administrative costs. Under the bill, the payment plans must include all fines and related fees or costs, and CIB may accept payments higher than the monthly installment amount.

Like payments made through CIB under existing law, agreeing to enter into a payment plan (1) is considered a plea of nolo contendere (no contest) and is not admissible in any civil or criminal proceeding and (2) does not result in the DMV commissioner assessing points against the person's driver's license.

Existing law requires the Judicial Department to provide notice about paying through CIB to law enforcement agencies and direct them to give it to anyone alleged to have committed a motor vehicle infraction or violation when issuing the complaint. Under the bill, this notice must have information about the option to pay through an installment payment plan.

Failure to Make Installment Payments

When a person fails to make a timely payment on an installment plan for the first or second time, the bill requires CIB to assess a \$15 late fee and allow the person an additional 30 days to make the missed payment for each instance. However, for a third missed payment, CIB must end the payment plan and report it to the DMV commissioner in the same way it reports other circumstances for driver's license suspension (see above).

MOVING VIOLATIONS

The bill deems violations of certain motor vehicle statutes "moving violations," which are exempt from its driver's license suspension prohibition. The following table lists these violations, with a general description of each.

Table: Moving Violations Under the Bill

CGS §	General Description
14-100a(d)	Requires (1) anyone transporting certain children in a motor vehicle to put them in car or booster seats meeting certain requirements or fasten their seatbelt (based on age and weight) or (2) certain violators to attend a car seat safety course
14-212d	Prohibits certain acts in a highway work zone that constitute endangerment or aggravated endangerment of a highway worker
14-218a	Prohibits drivers from traveling unreasonably fast
14-219	Prohibits speeding or driving to endanger
14-220(a)	Prohibits driving at a slow speed, with certain exceptions
14-222a	Prohibits negligent homicide with a motor vehicle
14-223(a)	Prohibits failing to stop when signaled by an officer or disobeying his or her motor vehicle operation-related directions
14-224(c)	Prohibits various actions related to motor vehicle racing, contests, speed or skill demonstrations, and street takeovers
14-230 to -238a	Sets requirements for driving in the right-hand or left-hand lane, passing, driving within lanes, and driving on divided highways and controlled-access highways
14-239 to -245	Sets requirements for driving on one-way streets and rotaries or roundabouts, distances between moving vehicles, vehicle turns, signaling, starting or backing vehicles, and intersection rights-of-way
14-246a to -247a	Sets requirements for vehicle right-of-way at highway junctions, driveways or private roads, and certain limited-vision areas like alleys and buildings
14-249 & -250	Sets requirements related to railroad crossings
14-277	Sets requirements for school bus operators and generally prohibits bus idling for more than three minutes
14-279	Prohibits improper passing of a standing school bus
14-281a(a)	Requires school buses to be operated at safe speeds and these buses and student transportation vehicles to display lighted headlamps
14-283	Prohibits drivers from obstructing or impeding an emergency vehicle
14-283b	Requires drivers to slow down and move over when approaching slow or stationary emergency vehicles
14-289b	Prohibits motorcycle and autocycle operators from taking certain actions and requires certain motorcycles to have illuminated head lamps while operated
14-296aa	Prohibits violating the state's distracted driving law
14-298 & -299	Provides the Office of the State Traffic Authority with jurisdiction over traffic control signals, devices, signs, and markings on state roads and local traffic authorities with these powers on roads under their jurisdiction; specifies how drivers, pedestrians, and bicyclists must comply with various signals
14-300(c) &	Sets requirements for drivers related to crosswalks, pedestrians, and

CGS §	General Description
(d), 14-300d, 14-300f	school crossing guards
14-301 to -304	Sets requirements for drivers related to stop signs, yield signs, one-way streets, and safety zones

BACKGROUND

Centralized Infractions Bureau (CIB)

By law, individuals charged with a motor vehicle-related infraction or violation may, generally, pay the fine through CIB without appearing in court. Payment is considered a plea of nolo contendere (no contest) and is not admissible in any civil or criminal proceeding. If an individual pleads not guilty, CIB must send the plea and request for trial to the clerk of the geographical area court where the trial would take place. The practice, procedure, rules of evidence, and burden of proof applicable in criminal proceedings apply in the trial (CGS § 51-164n).

Failure to Pay or Plead

By law, a person charged with an infraction or violation handled by CIB who fails to pay the related fine and any additional fees (or plead not guilty) by the required date or willfully fails to appear for a scheduled court appearance is guilty of an unclassified misdemeanor punishable by imprisonment of up to 10 days (CGS § 51-164r).

COMMITTEE ACTION

Transportation Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 22 Nay 12 (03/19/2025)