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HOUSE BILL NO. 519

INTRODUCED BY B. MITCHELL, K. BOGNER

A BILL FOR AN ACT ENTITLED: "AN ACT AUTHORIZING THE USE OF DIGITAL DRIVER'S LICENSES; GRANTING RULEMAKING AUTHORITY TO THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE; AND AMENDING SECTIONS 61-5-116 AND 61-14-201, MCA."

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:

**Section 1.** Section 61-5-116, MCA, is amended to read:

**"61-5-116. License to be carried and exhibited on demand.** (1) A licensee must have the licensee's driver's license in the licensee's immediate possession at all times when operating a motor vehicle and shall display the license upon demand of a justice of the peace, a city or municipal judge, a peace officer, a highway patrol officer, or a field deputy or inspector of the department. However, a person charged with violating this section may not be convicted if the person produces in court or the office of the arresting officer a driver's license issued to the person and valid at the time of the person's arrest.

(2) (a) Beginning September 1, 2025, a licensee may meet the requirements of subsection (1) by having a ~~digital OR HARD COPY~~state-issued original or digital version of the licensee's driver's license in the licensee's immediate possession at all times when operating a motor vehicle and displaying the license upon demand.

(b) Only a ~~digital OR HARD COPY~~state-issued original or digital version of the licensee's driver's license issued and authorized by the department is sufficient to meet the requirements of this section."

**Section 2.** Section 61-14-201, MCA, is amended to read:

**"61-14-201. Rulemaking authority -- driver's licenses and identification cards.** (1) The department may adopt rules to administer and enforce the provisions of Title 61, chapter 5.

(2) The department may adopt rules governing acceptable methods of proof of identification, including name, date of birth, and authorized presence, that an individual must submit when applying for a

1 license or identification card, including a new, renewal, or replacement license or identification card.

2 (3) The department may adopt rules governing the determination of the driver's license expiration  
3 date, minimum and maximum license terms, and license renewal requirements for a driver's license issued to a  
4 person who is a foreign national whose presence in the United States is temporarily authorized under federal  
5 law.

6 (4) The department shall adopt rules governing the calculation of grace periods for renewals and  
7 the calculation of other time periods established by statute or federal regulation.

8 (5) The department may adopt rules governing the renewal of a driver's license by a person in the  
9 military assigned to active duty who had a valid Montana driver's license at the time of entering active duty.

10 (6) The department shall adopt rules to set the standards for driver license examinations and  
11 reexaminations.

12 (7) The department may adopt rules to set the standards for photographs, certifications, and  
13 signature requirements for the issuance of driver's licenses.

14 (8) The department shall adopt rules establishing the functional abilities and skills required to  
15 exercise ordinary and reasonable control to safely operate a motor vehicle. The rules:

16 (a) must include operational restrictions based on the driver's ability and skills;

17 (b) may direct the design of one or more types of skills tests. A skills test may consist of:

18 (i) a comprehensive assessment of a person's functional abilities by means of an actual  
19 demonstration of the applicant's ability to exercise ordinary and reasonable control in the safe operation of a  
20 motor vehicle; or

21 (ii) a more limited assessment of a person's functional abilities, conducted at the discretion of the  
22 department, as related to a specific physical or mental condition or conditions or a request for reexamination.

23 (c) must include appropriate licensing criteria relating to the use of adaptive equipment or  
24 operational limits that can be readily discerned by law enforcement or a licensing agency in another jurisdiction.

25 (9) The department shall adopt rules establishing vision requirements for a person to safely  
26 operate a motor vehicle. The rules:

27 (a) must include the minimum uncorrected or corrected visual acuity requirements for both  
28 unrestricted and restricted licenses and operational restrictions based on the visual acuity of an applicant or

1 licensee, including the use of bioptic lenses; and

2 (b) may include minimum field of vision and depth perception requirements for both unrestricted  
3 and restricted licenses.

4 (10) The rules in subsections (8) and (9):

5 (a) may take into consideration any nationally recognized standards or recommended practices or  
6 standards of other jurisdictions for assessment of a person's functional abilities and skills;

7 (b) may be derived from medical guidelines and information compiled by driver licensing medical  
8 advisory or review boards from other jurisdictions, as well as information received from advocacy groups for  
9 persons with disabilities and senior citizens; and

10 (c) except as provided in 61-5-105, may not use a person's age or a person's physical or mental  
11 disability, limitation, or condition as a justification for the denial of a license.

12 (11) The department shall adopt rules governing the issuance of a restricted learner license,  
13 including when the department may issue a restricted learner license to allow for a driver to practice driving  
14 skills.

15 (12) The department shall adopt rules governing the issuance of a hardship license to a person who  
16 is at least 13 years of age and because of individual hardship needs a restricted driver's license, including a  
17 person who holds a learner license under 61-5-106. The department must consider, among other criteria,  
18 whether a hardship license is needed because the applicant's parent or guardian is not available to accompany  
19 the licensee, whether due to employment or circumstances related to the operation of a farm or ranch or  
20 because the parent or guardian does not hold a valid driver's license, and the licensee is required to drive to the  
21 licensee's school bus stop.

22 (13) The department may adopt rules governing probationary licenses, including:

23 (a) issuance to a person whose license has been suspended or revoked or whose license is  
24 subject to a discretionary suspension or revocation;

25 (b) the establishment of restrictions placed on a probationary license;

26 (c) the expiration of a probationary license;

27 (d) the cancellation of a probationary license for violating the restrictions on the probationary  
28 license or for another law violation; and

1 (e) the issuance, withdrawal, and monitoring of a restricted-use driving permit issued under 61-5-  
2 232.

3 (14) The department may adopt rules governing the requirements for a veteran designation on a  
4 driver's license or identification card.

5 (15) The department may adopt rules governing the issuance of a replacement driver's license.

6 (16) The department may adopt rules governing the certification process for cooperative driver  
7 testing program instructors.

8 (17) The department may adopt rules for the implementation of online driver's license renewal.

9 (18) The department shall adopt rules governing the issuance, renewal, and cancellation of  
10 identification cards that align with the proof of identity, residence, and authorized presence standards for a  
11 driver's license.

12 (19) The department may adopt rules for determining moving violations.

13 (20) The department may adopt rules for charging a fee for not appearing at a scheduled  
14 commercial skills test or motorcycle test and for the waiver of the fee for good cause shown.

15 (21) The department shall adopt rules governing restrictions for personal communication limitations  
16 and other medical information that would be helpful to a peace officer during a traffic stop.

17 (22) The department may adopt rules governing the conditions under which an applicant is eligible  
18 to receive a driver's license or identification card by expedited service and to set the fee for expedited service.

19 (23) (a) By September 1, 2025, the department shall establish a program that allows every  
20 qualifying applicant for a driver's license the ability-OPTION to acquire a digital version of the applicant's driver's  
21 license in addition to the physical version issued pursuant to 61-5-116.

22 (b) By July 1, 2025, the department shall adopt rules to implement subsection (23)(a), including but  
23 not limited to issuance requirements, specifications, security and privacy protections, and allowable uses  
24 associated with the digital driver's license.

25 ~~(23)~~(24) The department may adopt rules to implement any other provision of this title."

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