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BILL ANALYSIS



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Senate Bill 49 (as passed by the Senate)
Sponsor: Senator Roger Kahn, M.D.
Committee: Transportation

Date Completed: 7-22-09

RATIONALE

The Michigan Vehicle Code provides for the design of a standard license plate. The current standard design, first issued in 2007, consists of blue letters on a white background, with a blue strip across the top containing the word "Michigan". At the bottom of the plate is the State's website address. An individual may obtain a license plate from the Secretary of State by paying a vehicle registration fee, which is based on the value of the car (or the vehicle weight, for those manufactured in 1983 or earlier). Some have suggested that the State should make available a license plate inscribed with the words "I Believe", of the same design as the standard license plate and available at the same cost.

CONTENT

The bill would amend the Michigan Vehicle Code to require the Department of State to offer an "I Believe" registration plate.

The Code requires the Department to offer a standard design registration plate that complies with the requirements of the Code. The plate must be of a common color scheme and design, and must be made of fully reflectorized material and be visible at night.

The bill also would require the Department to offer an "I Believe" registration plate that was of a common color scheme and design and met the same material and visibility requirements.

MCL 257.224

ARGUMENTS

(Please note: The arguments contained in this analysis originate from sources outside the Senate Fiscal Agency. The Senate Fiscal Agency neither supports nor opposes legislation.)

Supporting Argument

The bill would allow a Michigan resident to choose the "I Believe" plate as an alternative to the standard plate. The message of belief would be an affirmation and would project a positive image of the State. Its particular significance would be personal and would be left to the interpretation of the individual purchasing the plate. Although some could consider it a statement of religious conviction, the plate would not constitute any endorsement of a particular religion or set of beliefs, maintaining the country's tradition of the separation of church and State.

Response: The bill does not include a funding source for developing and producing the plate.

Legislative Analyst: Curtis Walker

FISCAL IMPACT

The bill would have no fiscal impact on State or local government.

Fiscal Analyst: Joe Carrasco

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This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan Senate staff for use by the Senate in its deliberations and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.