**A** **BILL**

TO AMEND SECTION 56‑3‑1910, AS AMENDED, CODE OF LAWS OF SOUTH CAROLINA, 1976, RELATING TO THE DEPARTMENT OF MOTOR VEHICLES ISSUANCE OF LICENSE PLATES TO HANDICAPPED PERSONS, SO AS TO PROVIDE THAT THE DEPARTMENT CERTIFICATION FORM WHICH CAPTURES CRITERIA‑RELATED INFORMATION ABOUT PERSONS CONSIDERED HANDICAPPED MAY BE COMPLETED BY A DEPARTMENT EMPLOYEE WHO CAN VISUALLY DETERMINE WHETHER A PERSON IS PERMANENTLY HANDICAPPED.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina:

SECTION 1. Section 56‑3‑1910 of the 1976 Code, as last amended by Act 24 of 2009, is further amended to read:

“Section 56‑3‑1910. (A) As used in this article, ‘handicapped’ means a person who has one or more of the following conditions:

(1) an inability to ordinarily walk one hundred feet nonstop without aggravating an existing medical condition, including the increase of pain;

(2) an inability to ordinarily walk without the use of, or assistance from a brace, cane, crutch, another person, prosthetic device, wheelchair, or other assistive device;

(3) a restriction by lung disease to the extent that the person’s forced expiratory volume for one second when measured by spirometry is less than one liter, or the arterial oxygen tension is less than sixty mm/hg on room air at rest;

(4) requires use of portable oxygen;

(5) a cardiac condition to the extent that the person’s functional limitations are classified in severity as Class III or Class IV according to standards established by the American Heart Association. If the person’s status improves to a higher level, for example as a result of bypass surgery or transplantation, he no longer meets this criteria;

(6) a substantial limitation in the ability to walk due to an arthritic, neurological, or orthopedic condition, for example, coordination problems and muscle spasticity due to conditions that include Parkinson’s disease, cerebral palsy, or multiple sclerosis; or

(7) blindness.

(B) Upon payment of the regular motor vehicle license fee, the department may issue a license plate with a special number or identification indicating that the license plate was issued to a person certified as permanently handicapped. A license plate issued pursuant to this section must be accompanied by a certification form completed by a licensed physician, or by a department employee who can visually determine whether a person is permanently handicapped.

(C)(1) The department must develop a standardized certification form designed to capture criteria related information relating to persons considered handicapped. The form shall indicate whether the applicant meets one or more of the criteria, whether the condition is permanent or temporary, and if temporary, the expected duration.

(2) All persons that have been issued a handicapped license plate as of the effective date of this section will be issued a certificate upon renewal of the license plate. To renew the plate and receive the certificate, the person must be certified as permanently handicapped as provided in this section. Failure to carry a certificate as required by this section by a person that has been issued a handicapped license plate as of the effective date of this section is not a violation of the provisions of this section until after the person renews his license plate.

(D) Forms must be completed by physicians licensed to practice in South Carolina as defined in Section 40‑47‑5, or by a department employee who can visually determine whether a person is permanently handicapped.

(E) The special license plate authorized by this section also may be issued for a vehicle of special design and equipment designed to transport a disabled person who meets the requirements of this section if the vehicle is owned and titled in the name of the disabled person or in the name of a member of his immediate family.

(F) The special license plate authorized by this section also may be issued for a vehicle of special design and equipment designed to transport a disabled person who is certified as meeting the requirements of this section for a vehicle used by an agency, organization, or facility. Proof that the agency, organization, or facility transports a handicapped or disabled person must be in a manner prescribed by the department. A certificate from a licensed physician is not required to apply for the special license plate issued to the agency, organization, or facility.

(G) When processing applications for special license plates pursuant to this section, the department also shall issue a license plate registration certificate that must be carried at all times in the vehicle driven by or transporting the disabled individual. The certificate must display the name of the individual or organization to which the plate was issued.

(H) Vehicles displaying a special handicapped license plate only may park in designated handicapped parking spaces if that vehicle is driven by or transporting the disabled individual whose name appears on the license plate registration certificate, or if the certificate lists the name of the agency, organization, or facility authorized under subsection (G). The driver of the vehicle displaying the plate must present the registration when requested by law enforcement entities or their duly authorized agents.

(I) A person who qualifies for a license plate under this section and also qualifies as a disabled veteran under Section 56‑3‑1110 must be issued the license plate provided for in this section free of charge.

(J)(1) Except as provided in item (2), a person violating the provisions of this section is guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction, must be fined not less than five hundred dollars and not more than one thousand dollars or imprisoned for not more than thirty days for each offense.

(2) A person who illegally duplicates, forges, or sells a handicapped license plate or a person who falsifies information on an application form for a handicapped license plate is guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction, must be imprisoned for thirty days and fined not less than five hundred dollars and not more than one thousand dollars.”

SECTION 2. This act takes effect upon approval by the Governor.

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