

Privacy in Pennsylvania: Educating Policymakers on Mobile Drivers License Security

December 2025

Amber Turner

Executive Summary

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania is considering adopting mobile driver's licenses (mDLs), or licenses that users can carry on their phones. This project recommends that Pennsylvania launch an education task force to ensure that state policymakers understand potential privacy and cybersecurity risks before developing mDLs. The task force would bring together stakeholders across the political spectrum who would participate in a briefing series and structured workshops with expert technologists. These trainings, bolstered by tailored resources such as privacy risk guidance, would help policymakers better understand the risks and benefits of mDLs before proceeding with deployment.

Problem

As mDLs emerge as a digital identity solution across the United States and globally, they bring a range of data risks for Pennsylvania to consider. Other jurisdictions have tried implementing the technology, both in-house and through external vendors, to varying degrees of success. For example, mDLs have led to data breaches and increased government surveillance capabilities. These missteps expose gaps in mDLs' legal, technical, and ethical guardrails which have consequently impacted public trust in the governments experimenting with the tool. Understanding these privacy and digital rights risks would be key to proactively safeguarding future mDL users.

To learn more about this project, visit aspenpolicyacademy.org. Please note that the author's opinions published here are their own. This publication does not reflect the views of the Aspen Policy Academy or the Aspen Institute.

“A structured, expert-led policymaker education initiative must be the Commonwealth’s first step toward any responsible mDL implementation.”

Solution

To prepare Pennsylvania policymakers for mDL decisions, the project suggests creating an educational task force to establish a shared understanding of mDLs’ technical and legal risks. The task force would consist of key stakeholders, including state legislators, regulatory agencies, the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, technologists, law enforcement, and civil liberties organizations. Together, the group would convene to discuss topics such as cybersecurity vulnerabilities and digital surveillance. The task force would also receive a toolkit of resources, such as guidance on how to design tools with privacy in mind, to make their learnings actionable. If adopted, these steps would position Pennsylvania as a model for educating policymakers on emerging technology.

If you’d like to learn more, see the full project at aspennpolicyacademy.org/project/mobile-drivers-licenses-2025.



About the Aspen Policy Academy

The Aspen Institute's Policy Academy helps community leaders and experts across the political spectrum elevate their voices, influence key decisions, and strengthen democracy from the ground up. Our innovative training programs and resources equip people across sectors – from tech to the environment, science to civic engagement – with the skills to shape critical policy efforts. Learn more at aspennpolicyacademy.org.

Photo credit: CHUTTERSAP via Unsplash