



Advocating better skills, jobs, and incomes

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB0177:

**Motor Vehicle Administration - Authority to Suspend Registration for Violations
Recorded by Traffic Control Signal Monitoring Systems - Repeal**

TO: Senator Smith, Chair, and Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Christopher Dews, Policy Advocate

DATE: January 28, 2020

The Job Opportunities Task Force (JOTF) is an independent, nonprofit organization that advocates for improved employment qualities for workers in Maryland. We support SB0177 as it will reduce an economic barrier to sustaining a vehicle for employment.

According to data from the U.S. Census Bureau, almost 50% of Marylanders drive to another county for work. Both Maryland and Virginia have the highest cross-county commuter rate in the nation. This means that access to vehicular transportation is vital to the success of workers in Maryland, especially those from lower-income neighborhoods. Many workers from impoverished neighborhoods find higher-paying employment in the construction sector which requires a great deal of intercounty travel. Having a suspended registration from unpaid traffic fines will cripple a worker's ability to obtain or sustain employment.

The Civic Works Center for Sustainable Careers is a training program that transitions formerly incarcerated citizens in Baltimore City into full-time green career positions such as installing solar panels. The training team staff noted that access to sustainable transportation was by far the largest barrier in both the intake and placement process. They trained specifically for environmental construction positions that require travel all across the state for work and as such, applicants who had access to a vehicle took preference.

For those who owned a vehicle, 60% had suspended registrations for unpaid tickets. Most chose to drive anyway believing that, when it came to securing employment, the rewards outweighed the risks as many did not have the money to pay down the fines as they had no employment.

Senate Bill 177 prevents the MVA from suspending registration based on unpaid red light tickets. This is one huge step in the right direction for the benefit of eliminating employment barriers for the lower-income working class. For this reason, JOTF requests a favorable vote on Senate Bill 177.