



*Advocating better skills, jobs, and incomes*

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 46:**

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

TO: Hon. Kumar Barve, Chair, and Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee

FROM: Christopher Dews, Policy Advocate

DATE: February 6th, 2020

The Job Opportunities Task Force (JOTF) is an independent, nonprofit organization that advocates for improved employment qualities for workers in Maryland. We support House Bill 46 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. In the pursuit of higher-paying, family-sustaining positions, many workers from impoverished neighborhoods find a great deal of success in the construction sector - welding, labor, weatherization, demolition, etc. All, if not most of these positions require a great deal of intercounty travel to meet onsite. Thus, having a suspended registration from unpaid traffic fines will cripple a worker's ability to obtain or sustain employment.

JOTF runs a pre-apprenticeship training program called Project Jumpstart that transitions formerly incarcerated citizens in Baltimore City into full-time construction positions. The training team staff noted that access to sustainable transportation was by far the largest barrier in both the intake and placement process.

For those who owned a vehicle, it was revealed 60% had suspended registrations for unpaid tickets. Since they were without employment, they did not have the financial resources required to fend off these fines, not to mention that they had to prioritize providing for their families. This is a common occurrence with the indigent population of Maryland. Most are forced to choose between putting food on the table or paying off state-regulated punitive fees. The laws surrounding suspension effectively criminalize poverty as most drivers will choose to drive anyway believing that, when it comes to securing employment, the rewards outweighed the risks.

House Bill 46 seeks to address this issue by preventing 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 House Bill 46.