



Testimony in Support of SB234
Vehicle Laws – Suspension of Driver’s License or Registration – Unpaid Citations or Judgments
Tuesday, February 4, 2020

TO: The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr., Chair; The Honorable Jeff Waldstreicher, Vice Chair; and Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
FROM: Laura E. Irwin, Chair, Montgomery County Community Action Board

The Montgomery County Community Action Board, the County’s federally designated anti-poverty group, strongly supports SB234. Our Board is concerned about the current law allowing the Motor Vehicle Administration to suspend a person’s driver’s license and car registration for failure to pay traffic fines. This policy disproportionately impacts lower-income residents. Those who do not have the means to pay traffic fines are punished by losing their license. By not being able to legally drive to work, especially in areas with limited public transportation, an individual may lose wages, thus exacerbating his/her difficult financial situation. This bill will help stop this cycle of poverty by removing the MVA’s ability to suspend driver’s licenses and registration due to nonpayment of traffic fines, and by allowing for the establishment of a payment plan for traffic fines in excess of \$300.

Changing policy to remove this type of barrier is especially important in an expensive area like Montgomery County. The Self-Sufficiency Standard for a single adult with one infant and one preschooler in Montgomery County is over \$103,000 – nearly four times the amount one would earn at the County’s minimum wage.¹ Due to this high cost of living, many individuals encountering traffic violations are not in a position to pay the associated fines because they are already struggling to pay for their basic necessities such as housing and childcare. Suspending this person’s driver’s license is counterintuitive because it will only make the individual less likely to be able to pay their fines.

The Community Action Board asks for your support of SB234 and hopes that you will continue to explore other policies that remove barriers to self-sufficiency for all Marylanders.

¹ Maryland Self Sufficiency Standard <http://www.selfsufficiencystandard.org/>