

SB 234 / HB 280

Eliminating Fee-Based Driver's License Suspensions in Maryland

Good Morning my name is Nyeshia Brunson and I've been a Baltimore resident for more 20 years. I also have had my driver's license since I was 17 years old. I am now 32 years old. I attended and graduated from Baltimore city Public schools in 2005.

When I decide to make a career change in 2016 I went to school at North American trade school for HVAC. I completed and graduated in 2017. Two weeks after I graduated I received two tickets and a day later I had to have emergency surgery my life depended on it. While on bed rest a week after surgery. I get a call to come to an emergency hearing because my nephew has been physical abuse and if I didn't want him to go to Forster care I need to show up there. I was there not able to fully stand up straight but in the courtroom but I was there. A few weeks go by so now my body is healed and I'm ready to look for work. I have a new certificate and an a 8 year old child, to really motivate me but as I applied for job I soon would find out the my license Is suspended for the unpaid tickets. I was unable to get a job for at least several months until I found out about Civic Works.

The first month there I wrote the judge on my case for the tickets and asked could I do community service to help pay for my tickets. It took two months for me to get a response but I was denied. Civic works is a nonprofit who help many different individuals who come from all types of backgrounds so civic works connected me to a program called AmeriCorps where I could earn a small stipend as an Energy Ready installer. I wrote the judge again and asked if I could be put on payment plan while waiting for a response I was in the car with my father and he said he was feeling dizzy where 4 minutes away from his house. I took a chance to get him back home safely two blocks from his house I get pulled over. I knew I didn't do anything wrong so when I asked why I was being pulled over It was not for a moving violation but just because officer never seen the tags before it was a new car with dealer tags from Illinois. I asked the officer had he ever been to Illinois in his life but nevertheless he asked for my license and registration for the car. I gave him my father registration out of the glove department and I gave them my ID I explain to the officer what was going on and he informed me that he should be locking me up but he was just going to give me a ticket for driving on a suspend license. While waiting to go to court I get a letter in the mail saying I'm approved to get on a payment plan for the previous tickets I received. I had to pay 10% of all the tickets total before my license could become unsuspended. Also the payments were for a 10 month period. So if I missed a payment my license would be suspended again and I would be responsible for the remaining balance in full in order to get my license back. As of today I have completed the payment plan. When I went to court for driving on a suspended license my license was restored at that time so I received a year of probation.

This issue has caused distress to me, my family and I feel as though it was counterproductive. I have made attempts to follow the law but situations like this will cause someone to do the unthinkable because we still have to make a living and support our families and having a valid license is key. Therefore, this bill would not be so punitive and cause further damage to someone's future and with that being said I support Bill 234.