



**CARE BRAVELY**

HB234 – Child Support – Suspension of Payments and Arrears for Incarcerated Obligor – Modifications  
House Judiciary Committee – January 23, 2020

Testimony of Adam Rosenberg, Executive Director, VP Violence Intervention and Prevention

Position: **SUPPORT**

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I am writing in SUPPORT of HB234. LifeBridge Health has established a Comprehensive Violence Prevention and Intervention Program – one of the first of its kind in the nation -- to address community violence and trauma throughout the lifespan. Our evidence-based programs include a nationally accredited children’s advocacy center, two domestic violence programs, a multidisciplinary elder abuse program, **and two street violence programs, Safe Streets and a hospital-based violence interruption program.** Together, these trauma response programs provide wraparound mental health, medical, legal, job training, and ongoing case management support to our region’s most vulnerable citizens.

The clients we help in our street violence programs are generally men, usually young men, who are seeking a way out of a life of violence. One impediment to these men thriving and becoming financially stable is child support obligations that are not suspended when they are incarcerated. Upon re-entering society, they must quickly find a new job, regain their footing AND immediately face arrearages and penalties for child support obligations. These men are not seeking to deny their obligations – merely to delay them while they find their footing.

HB 234 will modify child support by suspending child support orders if the parent will be incarcerated more than 180 days, if the obligor does not have any means to pay the order, making current child abuse payments not past due, and arrearages may not accrue during any period when the obligor is incarcerated. Upon release from incarceration, arrearages also may not accrue for 60 days. These modifications will better help individuals upon reentry into society, instead of increasing the likelihood of entering the underground economy.

**Challenges for obligors upon incarceration release.** Incarcerated noncustodial parents often enter prison with child support obligations without any realistic ability to pay them. This creates a significant source of debt for incarcerated parents. That debt may interfere with a parent’s ability to obtain housing, transportation and employment. In some cases, the parent may return to a life of violence as an easier means of securing income.

**Beneficial to the child.** Giving noncustodial parents a chance to get back on their feet could provide opportunity to have a more consistent presence with their child. By avoiding increasing delinquencies by modifying child support, a reliable parent and source of income can be emotionally, psychologically, and socially beneficial to the child.

For all of the heretofore stated reasons, we request a **FAVORABLE** report for HB234.