

SB0884, Driver's Licenses - Suspension for Child Support Arrearages - Exception
Testimony in **Support**

To: Chair Smith and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee
From: Arielle Juberg, Baltimore, Maryland 21234

My name is Arielle Juberg. I am a resident of Baltimore County in District 8. I belong to Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) in Baltimore. SURJ is also working in collaboration with the Campaign for Justice, Safety, and Jobs. I am testifying in **support** of SB0884, Driver's Licenses - Suspension for Child Support Arrearages – Exception.

SB0884 matters to me because I want Maryland's children to be financially and emotionally supported by caring adults. Punishing non-payment of child support by suspending a driver's license is a punitive measure that makes it harder for someone to earn a living and pay child support. This bill would ensure that a driver's license is not suspended for non-payment of child support if the obligor's income is not greater than 300% of the federal poverty level. Currently, a driver's license can be suspended after two months of missed child support payments. In our regional economy where almost half of workers drive to jobs in another county, a license suspension can make it impossible for the non-custodial parent to access and keep a job. *Without a job, a non-custodial parent won't have the earnings to actually pay child support.* This can also negatively impact business owners who are already having difficulty finding employees. A license suspension can also make it impossible for the non-custodial parent to visit their child, attend school events, or take their child to appointments. License suspensions reduce the amount of financial and emotional support that the non-custodial parent can provide.

Because driving is critical for many low-income workers, some non-custodial parents may continue to drive with a suspended license. This can lead to fines and penalties, which the non-custodial parent may be unable to pay. A driver's license suspension can spiral from unpaid fines to time in jail. It is yet another example of a system that criminalizes poverty.

An in-depth investigation by the Baltimore Sun in 2020 found child support non-payment penalties had a wide-ranging and damaging impact, especially on the poorest neighborhoods. Subsequently, the [Baltimore Sun Editorial Board](#) commented “And by all means: Leave licenses — professional and drivers’ — alone. Nothing shows the folly of the system more, or proves the point that punishment has taken on too big a role, than targeting a parent’s income earning potential. It’s a child support system; supporting children should be the No. 1 goal.”

I want Maryland children to grow up with financial and emotional support. Punishing low-income workers with driver's license suspension creates yet another burden to maintaining a job and making child support payments. It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to vote **in support of SB0884**. Thank you for your time, consideration, and service.