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SB 884

March 31, 2022

TO: Members of the House Judiciary Committee
FROM: Natasha Mehu, Director, Office of Government Relations
RE: Senate Bill 884 – Driver's Licenses - Suspension for Child Support Arrearages - Exception
POSITION: SUPPORT

Chair Clippinger, Vice Chair Moon, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **supports** Senate Bill (SB) 884.

SB 884 repeals the current practice of suspending driver's licenses after missing two months of child support payments for those making less than \$39,000 annually.

According to the 2019 Abell Foundation report *Reforming Child Support to Improve Outcomes for Children and Families*, “Noncustodial parents with the lowest incomes and most barriers to employment are often expected to pay an impossibly large share of their income toward child support. If child support orders are set beyond the ability of parents to pay them, compliance falls off and debt builds. When parents fall behind, poorly targeted and overly aggressive enforcement can make it even harder for them to stay employed and keep up with their support payments. Noncustodial parents who cannot keep up sometimes turn to work ‘under the table’ or even engage in illegal activities to support their children and themselves.”

The current policy of suspending driver’s licenses for low-income parents does not help children and has negative public safety consequences. Until Baltimore City and Maryland have a more robust public transit system that can connect job seekers with employment opportunities, suspending driver’s licenses is counter-productive.

As the Abell report explains, “Enforcement mechanisms alone are not effective in increasing collections from low-income parents. In fact, overly aggressive enforcement efforts, particularly driver’s license suspensions, can make matters worse, by interfering with work and family responsibilities. A driver’s license suspension can set up a vicious cycle, making it harder to pay child support than before the suspension.”

We respectfully request a **favorable** report on SB 884.

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