



POSITION STATEMENT

TESTIMONY PRESENTED TO THE HOUSE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

SENATE BILL 884 – DRIVER'S LICENSES - SUSPENSION FOR CHILD SUPPORT ARREARAGES - EXCEPTION

Sponsor – Senators Watson and Smith

March 31, 2022

**DONALD C. FRY
PRESIDENT & CEO
GREATER BALTIMORE COMMITTEE**

Position: Support

The Greater Baltimore Committee (GBC) supports Senate Bill 884, which would end Maryland's practice of suspending an individual's driver's license if the licensed driver is delinquent in paying child support and makes less than 300% of the federal poverty level unless the driver has been judicially determined to be voluntarily impoverished. The current process of suspending an individual's driver's license for child support arrearages makes it difficult for an impacted individual to maintain steady employment and pay child support.

Studies have found a strong correlation between a lack of legal authority to drive and unemployment/underemployment. The lack of a driver's license makes it difficult to find or keep a job. This is true even when a license is not needed to perform the job responsibilities, but is needed to get to the job site. A study of New Jersey drivers found that 42 percent of individuals whose licenses had been suspended lost their jobs within six months after the license suspension, and nearly half were unable to obtain new employment during the period of suspension. Research also shows that suspending driver's licenses for non-driving related violations disproportionately impacts low income and minority drivers.

The American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators recommended in 2013 that states repeal laws requiring suspensions for non-highway safety-related violations. In addition, in 2016 the U.S. Department of Justice outlined policy guidance related to enforcement of court fines and fees, encouraging state and local courts to "avoid suspending driver's licenses as a debt collection tool," and instead reserve it only for cases that would "increase public safety."

The GBC has long called for modifications to child support enforcement and driver's license suspension to lessen barriers to workforce participation. Allowing individuals who make less than 300% of the federal poverty level to maintain their driver's licenses means that they are more likely to be able to make child support payments. Senate Bill 884 differs from previous efforts to end the practice of suspending a driver's license due to delinquency in child support arrearages in that it retains suspensions for those who make more than 300% of the federal poverty level. This distinguishes between individuals who might be struggling to pay child support and individuals who can afford to pay but fail to do so.

The GBC contends that exempting those who make less than 300% of the federal poverty level from driver's license suspensions due to delinquent child support payments is an important part of lessening barriers to workforce participation, ultimately benefitting the parent, child, and the economy at large.

For these reasons, the Greater Baltimore Committee urges a favorable report on Senate Bill 884.

The Greater Baltimore Committee (GBC) is a non-partisan, independent, regional business advocacy organization comprised of hundreds of businesses -- large, medium and small -- educational institutions, nonprofit organizations and foundations located in Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Carroll, Harford, and Howard counties as well as Baltimore City. The GBC is a 67-year-old, private-sector membership organization with a rich legacy of working with government to find solutions to problems that negatively affect our competitiveness and viability.

GREATER BALTIMORE COMMITTEE

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