



**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 164/ HOUSE BILL 326**

**Driver's Licenses - Suspension for Child Support Arrearages - Exception**

TO: Members of the House Judiciary Committee and Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee.

FROM: Deandre Wiggins, Program Manager

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**BetterU Construction** support(s) SENATE BILL 164/ HOUSE BILL 326 to repeal the punitive practice of driver's license suspensions for lower-income obligors.

BetterU Construction Training is a 14-week pre-apprenticeship program for Baltimore residents with a high school diploma or GED. Experienced teachers prepare our students for success in the construction trades with an overview of entry-level plumbing, carpentry, and electrical skills. Students also receive essential safety training, financial coaching, a stipend, and driver's education. More than 70 percent of students are placed in careers that lead to high wages and apprenticeships.

One of the most significant barriers to job placement is the lack of transit access due to license suspensions for child support. The majority of our trainees are returning citizens and once they are released they will naturally owe back child support which, of course, leads to suspended licenses. Trying to lift the license suspensions for the trainees becomes a massive burden for our case managers and becomes a factor in determining which individuals are allowed in, which is counterproductive to the enforcement mechanism.

SENATE BILL 164/ HOUSE BILL 326 ends the practice of suspending licenses for child support arrears of those making less than 300% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) or \$41k annually. No evidence suggests suspending an individual's driver's license improves the collection of arrears in the long run for persons at this income level. Suspending licenses for lower-income obligors runs counter to the stated purpose of increasing compliance in child support payments and engagement with family where appropriate. In fact, it cripples the primary way the Child Support Enforcement Agency can collect (wage



garnishments) by eliminating access to employment needed to pay down arrears. For these reasons and more, we urge a favorable report on SENATE BILL 164/ HOUSE BILL 326.