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Appropriations Committee



The Maryland House of Delegates
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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

February 7, 2023

Chair Luke Clippinger
Vice Chair David Moon
House Judiciary Committee
House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

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

Chair Clippinger, Vice Chair Moon, and Members of the Judiciary Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you on House Bill 326. This bill creates an exception to the driver's license suspension statute for child support obligors making less than 300% of the Federal Poverty Level (in 2023 that is \$41K per year).

Today, Maryland Code Ann., Fam. Law § 10-119 states that upon 60 days of nonpayment of child support an obligor shall have their license or privilege to drive suspended. For licenses suspended for child support, the penalty is a \$500 fine and possible arrest. Child support debt can trigger a suspended driver's license, arrest, or hefty fines regardless of the financial status of the obligor.

In 2015, NPR reported that 62% of Marylanders who owe child support make less than minimum wage but owe at least \$10,000 in unpaid arrearages. They will struggle to pay this debt, especially when the current law magnifies the issue by hindering their ability to access employment.

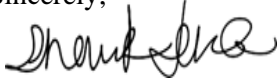
Mobility is key in Maryland's regional economy. The Census Bureau reported that almost 50% of Marylanders travel outside of their county for employment. This statistic is more pronounced for lower-income communities of color where there is a scarcity of jobs available by public transit. In fact, only 9% of jobs in the Baltimore region can be reached within one hour by public transit. Thus, a valid driver's license and a vehicle are necessary for economic sustainability.

Suspending a driver's license can have a significant impact on a person's ability to gain and maintain employment. A report cited by the Abell Foundation found that 42% of individuals who had their licenses suspended lost jobs as a result of the suspension, 45% of those who lost jobs could not find another job, and 88% of those that were able to find another job reported a decrease in income (Voorhees, 2006).

Maryland should pass House Bill 326 to repeal driver's license suspensions as a penalty for obligors who make less than \$41k per year (300% FPL). License suspensions for workers at that income level cannot be considered appropriate or effective as the suspension ultimately creates obstacles to employment and makes it more difficult for the obligor to gain stability and meet their financial obligations.

I ask for a favorable report on HB 326.

Sincerely,



Delegate Shaneka Henson

The Undersigned Organizations/Individuals Support of SB0164/ HB0326

1. Job Opportunities Task Force (JOTF)
2. BetterU Construction Training
3. Maryland Legal Aid
4. University of Baltimore School of Law
5. Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service
6. Showing Up for Racial Justice
7. Out for Justice
8. Life After Release
9. CASH Campaign of Maryland
10. America Works
11. Court Watch PG
12. HTP Homes
13. Helping Oppressed People Excel
14. Helping Ourselves Transform
15. Public Justice Center
16. Center for Urban Families
17. Civic Works Center for Sustainable Careers
18. 1199 SEIU
19. Baltimore Harm Reduction Coalition
20. PIVOT Baltimore
21. Economic Action Maryland
22. Northeast Catholic Community
23. Baltimore Mutual Aid for Mental Health
24. Marylanders Against Poverty
25. Cornerstone Full Gospel Church