



OUT FOR JUSTICE

Jonathan Williams

Regarding Senate Bill Hearing For HOUSE BILL 0326

2/7/2023

Good morning Senators,

My name is Jonathan Williams and I am a resident of Baltimore City. I am for the proposed HOUSE BILL 0326 - Driver's Licenses – Suspension for Child Support Arrearages – Exception.

I am a father of a 5-year-old whose mother placed me on child support. After we signed the child support order, we had to wait 6 months for the judge to sign before the order went into effect. I was given misleading and/or incomplete information initially and was told that I would not be able to make child support payments until the judge signs the order and that payments would not start until the order was signed. The judge eventually signed the order in August of 2017. It wasn't until I got a notice in the mail shortly thereafter, that my license was suspended for child support arrears for over \$9000. I knew when I signed the order that my payments would be \$840 a month and included in that were court fees. Once the court fees were paid, the payments would drop down to \$640 per month.

At the time, I was bringing home around \$2600 monthly from my job as an IT Site Coordinator. I started driving for Uber part-time to supplement my income to help pay my child support for when the time came. Both jobs required that I have a valid driver's license. My expenses at the time included a \$1200 mortgage, \$500 car payment, \$160 car insurance, \$250 utilities, \$200 for gas, groceries and miscellaneous purchases. At the end of the month, I had about \$300 left over. While driving for Uber, I was averaging about \$20 per hour, which would have given me a max \$800 per month in extra income.

The immediate arrival of a \$9000+ bill was a huge setback. It was unexpected and put me in a financial bind instantly.

When I contacted The Department of Human Resources, no one I talked to cared to even listen and understand my situation. I would get similar statements - "You can get your license reinstated when you pay all of your back pay," "You should have saved the money during those months". It appeared that I wasn't going to get any assistance until I paid what was owed. At this point I gave up because doing the right thing seemed more like a punishment rather than getting monetary help for my son.

The website even states:



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“You have the right to request a review for a modification if there has been a change in circumstances since the order was entered, or if three years have passed since the order was entered or last reviewed for modification. Examples of changes in circumstances that may be grounds for a modification are: significant changes in income, changes in work-related day care cost, changes in health care costs, a change in custody, or a change in the financial needs of the child. Contact the Customer Care Center at 1-800-332-6347 for additional information.”

Nothing in this paragraph was even considered for discussion when I called DHR.

The end result was me having to short-sell my house before the house went into foreclosure and have my car voluntarily repossessed. I can't drive my car because my license is suspended, which means I can't drive for Uber to make the extra money to be able to afford my house and car and pay my child support. Not having a license has prevented me from finding a high paying job because those jobs are not readily found in Baltimore City

The repossession resulted in an extra \$9000 of debt on top of the \$8000 that I already owed. At this point, I'm now \$17000 in debt and have lost two jobs. I've now lost my home, car, both jobs and I'm in debt. This domino effect had me a couple steps away from going to jail for not paying child support. How can someone pay child support when they have lost every means of paying it?

I am completely in support of proposed HOUSE BILL 0326. I hope that my testimony sheds some light and understanding on what many parents have gone through and are going through. The rules and regulations as they currently are, in some situations, hurts more than helps. Please take into consideration that there are parents who want the best for their child(ren) and that situations like mine are sensitive and need the flexibility to be negotiated.

I believe that situations like this can be avoided in the future, if more than just income was factored into the child support process so a better judgment can be made before a punishment is handed down that is a detriment to all parties involved.

Your consideration of these matters and solutions is very much appreciated