



## **TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 139/ HOUSE BILL 813**

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

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

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

FROM: Antoine Gaines

My name is Antoine Gaines, and I reside in District 44B. I support Senate Bill 139/ House Bill 813 to ensure that driver's license suspensions for inability to pay child support are only used in appropriate cases, not when it will harm families or cause parents to lose their jobs

On May 5th, 2007, I married my now ex-wife and, within two years, gave birth to two beautiful daughters. With her child from a previous relationship, we were a solid family of five until my work situation became fractious. I assumed everything would work out, but I was dead wrong. I discovered that she was cheating on me, and this ruined us. In June 2009, she filed for child support against me even though we were still living together. Seven days after she filed, when we were in court, we received joint physical and legal custody of our children. In November, I received notice that I had to pay child support, which has been that way ever since. From there, our relationship continued to destabilize.

We divorced in 2012, and a judge awarded her primary physical custody because I lived with my mother, while she had her apartment. The judge, however, did award us joint legal custody. I had visitation and still wanted to be an involved father. About a year later, she absconded with my children to another state against court orders and made it extremely difficult to see my children.

For over a decade, while paying child support, the Child Support Enforcement Agency (CSEA) suspended my license off and on. My license was suspended even while my wages were being garnished each month.

In 2020, during the pandemic, I discovered that my children were being abused by their new stepfather, so they returned to Maryland to live with me, and they have been living with me full-time ever since. I filed to modify both custody and child support in the Circuit Court but have had trouble serving their mother because I do not have her exact address, as she still lives out of state. Because of this, both motions are still pending. I updated CSEA of the change in custody, but I still had to pay child support and deal with on and off-license suspensions. CSEA knows my children are living with me but has done nothing to help me.



Most recently, I received another license suspension notice. I pleaded with CSEA not to suspend my license. They know my children live with me, and they know I drive UBER, so I need my driver's license for employment to care for my children financially. They said they would not lift the suspension unless I made a large lump sum payment. After speaking with Maryland Legal Aid, they helped to restore my license. I am incredibly grateful to Stacy of Legal Aid for advocating. The passage of this bill would help to end my struggle with this horrible child support system and allow me to raise my children in peace. I urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 139/ House Bill 813.