



**MARYLAND
LEGAL AID**

Advancing
**Human Rights and
Justice for All**

Senate Bill 174

Child Support – Suspension of Driver’s Licenses

In the House Judiciary Committee

Hearing on March 26, 2024

Position: FAVORABLE

Maryland Legal Aid (MLA) submits its written testimony on SB174 at the request of its sponsor, Senator C. Anthony Muse.

MLA appreciates the opportunity to testify in support of this vital legislation, which will ensure that a parent owing child support is provided due process before their driver’s license is suspended. MLA is a private, nonprofit law firm that provides free legal services to thousands of low-income Maryland residents in civil matters. MLA has represented countless non-custodial parents whose driver’s licenses have been suspended under the Child Support Administration’s (CSA) automated driver’s license suspension system, a practice that has led to instability, inequity, and injustice for our clients. Many of our clients are people whose licenses never should have been suspended in the first place because they are disabled, have custody of their children, are reliant on their vehicles for employment, or are actively making child support payments. If enacted, SB 00174 would abolish the automated license suspension referral system that currently results in large swaths of obligors being referred to the Motor Vehicle Administration for license suspension each month, and would instead establish a judicial procedure for suspending licenses only in truly appropriate cases.

SB174 is grounded in fairness; it requires CSA to (1) petition the courts in child support cases where it wishes to pursue driver’s license suspension, (2) serve that petition on non-custodial parents in accordance with the Maryland Rules, and (3) prove to the court that license suspension is appropriate in a given case. In doing so, SB174 will ensure that this driver’s license suspension – a drastic measure with lasting repercussions – is used sparingly, transparently, and accurately. MLA’s clients will benefit greatly from the due process protections and procedural safeguards created by this bill, particularly the service of process requirement as well as the continued ability of the CSA to use its discretion *not* to seek licenses suspension in cases where it would not be appropriate. MLA thanks Senator Muse and Delegate Simpson for their commitment to ending the cycle of poverty that is perpetuated by inappropriate and unjust license suspension and the lack of due process under the current system.

For these reasons, Maryland Legal Aid urges the Committee to issue a FAVORABLE report on SB174. If you have any questions, please contact Ameer Vora, Director of Advocacy for Family Law, at (443) 604-6186 or avora@mdlaborg.