



NAACP

Maryland
STATE CONFERENCE

March 26, 2024

Judiciary Committee

Maryland General Assembly

Annapolis, Maryland 21401

SB 174 – Child Support – Suspension of Driver’s Licenses

Members of the Committee:

I am writing on behalf of the Maryland State Conference of the NAACP. We support Senate Bill 174, Child Support – Suspension of Driver’s Licenses, which is currently before the House Judiciary Committee. We ask that all members of the committee support this very important legislation that ensures due process before suspending licenses for child support.

This legislation provides parents with the right to due process and a right to be heard prior to the suspension of their license. An individual may have a reasonable explanation for being 60 days late on child support. Currently, the suspension is automatic and does not leave room for one to evaluate the individual circumstances that may contribute to the arrearages. Some reasonable explanations can include, that the minor child lives with the obligor, that the suspension would ruin the ability to assist the custodial parent with the child’s transportation needs, the obligor is disabled, and risking the loss of employment opportunities.

Research demonstrates that lower income communities of color are more likely to be affected by license suspensions connected to child support payments. The Abell foundation has found that “42% of individuals who had their licenses suspended [also] lost their jobs.” The loss of a job is directly related to the suspension of their license. This is counter to the desired goal of encouraging the individual to make child support payments. In addition, low-income workers are largely impacted since the ability to travel may be important to maintaining their ability to work. 40% of Marylanders travel outside their county for employment and public transportation may not have the ability to meet the travelers needs as only 8.5% of jobs in Baltimore, for example, can be reached within one hour on public transportation.

Currently 71% of the license suspensions in 2015-2020 are made up of Black parents, which is of deep concern to the Maryland NAACP. Child support debt also contributes to arrests and incarceration which further impacts communities of color. It should be best practice to allow individuals the right due process when facing the suspension of their license.

Senate Bill 174 will assist in resolving this by ensuring that before the Child Support Enforcement Administration notifies the MVA of an obligor in arrears, a circuit court hearing needs to be established to determine if the suspension is appropriate. It is not wise to remove transportation access for people who may or may not owe money as it prevents them from paying. This is a rational approach to ensuring that the state is not needlessly endangering the well-being of families by limiting the obligor's access to employment and quality time with their child. For these reasons, we urge a favorable report.

For these reasons, we support HB 311 and strongly urge your support to protect all the citizens of Maryland.

In Service,

NaShona Kess, Esq., MLS

Executive Director

Nashonakess.mdnaacp@gmail.com