

# JOTF JOB OPPORTUNITIES TASK FORCE

*Advocating better skills, jobs, and incomes*

## **TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 613:**

Fines and Fees - Possession, Display, or Renewal of Registration

**TO:** Chairman Kumar P. Barve, and members of the House Environment & Transportation Committee

**FROM:** Derrell Frazier, Policy Advocate

**DATE:** February 20, 2020

The Job Opportunities Task Force (JOTF) is an independent, nonprofit organization that develops and advocates policies and programs to increase the skills, job opportunities, and incomes of low-skill, low-wage workers and job seekers in Maryland. We support House Bill 613 as a means to reduce the impact of fines and fees on workers in an effort to eliminate the criminalization of poverty..

The employment opportunities for individuals with a suspended driver's license are nearly nonexistent, especially for the low-wage worker. Many of the jobs they are eligible to even apply for require a valid driver's license such as jobs in construction, plumbing, sales, and jobs that require a registration. Additionally, Maryland's regional economy and lack of a regional public transit system places most residents at the mercy of mobility – the key to mobility being a valid driver's license.

JOTF runs Project JumpStart, a job-readiness, pre-apprenticeship construction training program with Associated Builders and Contractors. Many of our program participants and graduates are formerly incarcerated citizens in Baltimore City looking to access career pathways in the building trades. Our Case Managers and Job Placement Director notes that access to affordable, efficient transportation was by far the largest barrier in both the intake and placement process. The construction industry requires constant travel, including different job sites across the state, making a driver's license a key industry criteria. HB 613 seeks to alter the fine for failing to possess a vehicle registration card while driving or to display a vehicle registration card during a traffic stop by establishing a \$10 fine rather than a maximum fine of \$500. The proposed legislation would also authorize a court to waive a fine imposed under the Act and authorizes the Motor Vehicle Administration to charge a \$25 late fee for registration renewals that occur more than 1 week after a registration has expired

For those who owned a vehicle, 60% had suspended registrations for unpaid fines and fees. Most chose to drive anyway believing that, when it came to securing employment, the rewards outweighed the risks as many did not have the money to pay down the fines as they had no employment.

Low-wage workers need access to reliable transportation in order to secure and maintain employment and to meet life's demands. For these reasons, we urge a **FAVORABLE** report on House Bill 613.