



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 402

Driver's Licenses – Suspension for Child Support Arrearages - Repeal

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

February 9, 2021

Submitted by Stacey Jefferson and Julia Gross, Co-Chairs

Member Agencies:

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Marylanders Against Poverty

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Marylanders Against Poverty (MAP) supports SB 402, which removes the requirement for the Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA) to suspend an individual's driver's license for having child support arrearages, and repeals the process for the Child Support Administration to notify the MVA of an individual's child support arrearages.

Lack of reliable transportation is a significant barrier to obtaining employment in Maryland. Nationally, Maryland ranks 2nd behind New York in the longest commute to work, as Marylanders spend an average of 33.7 minutes commuting to their job.¹ Workers in Maryland need a car to access employment opportunities and to support their families. Particularly in the pandemic, many low-income Marylanders are supplementing their household income in the "gig economy" by using their vehicle to deliver food and drive for app-based rideshares. Moreover, the higher paid jobs in low-wage professions – like managers of retail and food establishments – require their staff to have valid driver's license for employment. Thus, any provision that jeopardizes reliable transportation in our programs disproportionately harms low-income workers and ultimately creates further economic hardship.

Suspending driver's licenses of low-income obligors exacerbates their struggle to obtain a steady income and support their family. Currently, Maryland law revokes or suspends the license of child support obligors who are 60 days out of compliance for a non-commercial license and 120 days for a commercial license. This law creates an immediate obstacle for low-wage workers who struggle to comply with their child support orders. Suspension of a noncustodial parent's license sets up a vicious cycle, often making it harder for the parent to make their child support payments than before they lost their license.² Although Maryland law does provide an opportunity for the noncustodial parent to request a pre-suspension investigation on the grounds that they have a hardship, the burden is on the noncustodial parent to prove they deserve to keep their license due to hardship, and they often have difficulty qualifying.

Removing the current enforcement policies for driver license suspensions for child support arrearages is better for children, and better for our communities. When parents are able to maintain employment – and have options to seek out higher wage jobs – children are more likely to receive support payments. In addition, by maintaining transportation, noncustodial parents can build meaningful parent-child relationships and uphold their familial responsibilities. By eliminating barriers to transportation and employment, SB 402 will create economic stability not only for low-income Marylanders struggling to make child support payments, but also for their families.

MAP appreciates your consideration and strongly urges a favorable report on SB 402.

Marylanders Against Poverty (MAP) is a coalition of service providers, faith communities, and advocacy organizations advancing statewide public policies and programs necessary to alleviate the burdens faced by Marylanders living in or near poverty, and to address the underlying systemic causes of poverty.

¹ US Census. American Community Survey. 2019 ACS 1-year estimates. Commuting Characteristics. <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=S0801&g=0400000US24&tid=ACST1Y2019.S0801&hidePreview=true>

² Abell Foundation. 2019. *Reforming Child Support to Improve Outcomes for Children and families.* <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED596117.pdf>