



**HB 580 Driver's Licenses - Suspension for Child Support Arrearages - Repeal
Judiciary
February 11, 2021
SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS**

Chairman Clippinger, Vice-Chair and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 580. This bill repeals the law that requires the Department of Motor Vehicles to suspend an individual driver's license due to arrearage of child support and will allow a parent access to the most common type of transportation in order to travel to work and earn money for support.

The CASH Campaign of Maryland promotes economic advancement for low-to-moderate income individuals and families in Baltimore and across Maryland. CASH accomplishes its mission through operating a portfolio of direct service programs, building organizational and field capacity, and leading policy and advocacy initiatives to strengthen family economic stability. CASH and its partners across the state achieve this by providing free tax preparation services through the IRS program 'VITA', offering free financial education and coaching, and engaging in policy research and advocacy. **Almost 4,000 of CASH's tax preparation clients earn less than \$10,000 annually. More than half earn less than \$20,000.**

The major flaw of the current systematic suspension of driver's licenses for failure to pay child support is the assumption that the individual is willfully avoiding their duty to provide means for a child's wellbeing. The current law does not account for an individual's ability to pay. About 9% of the population in Maryland live below the federal poverty level and an additional 30% are income constrained and do not have sufficient funds to consistently make ends meet.¹ While the intent of license suspension appears to be to enforce support payments, the true consequences disproportionately fall on disadvantaged communities of color and create a complicated web of barriers that result in a further inability to pay support.² These workers must choose to either keep working without a reliable means of transportation and risk the high probability of job loss or continue to drive and maintain employment, but risk additional fines and fees and perhaps a downward spiral into the criminal justice system if caught. In either case, the result is often reduced income and ultimately less resources for the child.

The economic consequences of the current pandemic will likely increase the number of parents struggling to make child support payments. Furthermore, the current penalty of revoking a driver's license for delinquent child support will only further exacerbate the problem by impeding the efforts of cash strapped noncustodial parents and slow recovery for the whole family. This will decrease the capability of low income non-custodial parents to be accountable. CASH supports an amendment that will focus this bill on non-custodial parents that make less than 300% of the Federal Poverty Line (FPL). This would protect low income workers making under \$38,640 a year, while accounting for custodial parent's desires.

For these reasons, we encourage you to return a favorable report with amendments on HB 580.

¹ <https://www.unitedforalice.org/state-overview/maryland>

² https://www.acslaw.org/issue_brief/briefs-landing/discriminatory-drivers-license-suspension-schemes/