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Appropriations Committee



The Maryland House of Delegates
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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

March 8, 2022

Chair: Delegate Luke Clippinger
Vice Chair: Delegate David Moon
6 Bladen Street Room 101
House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Members of the House Judiciary Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to introduce House Bill 1293, Driver's Licenses - Suspension For Child Support Arrearages - Exception, which makes an exception to the driver's license suspension statute for child support obligors making less than 300% of the Federal Poverty Level.

Mobility is key in Maryland's regional economy. The Census Bureau reported in 2019 that almost 50% of Marylanders travel outside of their county for employment. This statistic is more pronounced for lower-income communities, and communities of color where there is a scarcity of jobs available by public transit. For example, only 9% of jobs in the Baltimore region can be reached within one hour, one-way by public transit. Thus for economic sustainability, both a valid driver's license and a vehicle are necessary.

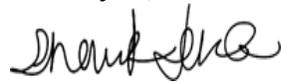
In 2015, NPR reported that 62% of Marylanders who owe child support make less than minimum wage, but owe at least \$10,000 in unpaid arrearages. They will never pay down this debt, especially when the current law magnifies the issue by crippling their mobility. Maryland Code Ann., Fam. Law § 10-119 states that upon 60 days of nonpayment of child support an obligor shall have their license or privilege to drive suspended. Maryland Code Ann., Transportation §16-303 states that driving on an invalid license (suspended, canceled, or revoked) in Maryland is a crime punishable by up to (1) one year in jail, a \$1000 fine, or both. §16-303(h) For licenses suspended for child support, the penalty is a \$500 fine and possible arrest. As such, child support

debt triggers a suspended driver's license, arrest, or hefty fines, further complicating the ability of low-wage workers to secure employment and make payments.

Federal Code 42 U.S.C.A. § 666 (a) demands that all states have laws that “**increase the effectiveness** of the [child support enforcement] program which the state administers” and allows the State to withhold, suspend, or restrict licenses of individuals owing child support in “**appropriate cases**” (16). However, our current suspension practices may have already left us out of compliance since we are effectively preventing lower-income obligors from the employment needed to pay their obligation.

As such, Maryland should pass House Bill 1293 to repeal driver's license suspensions as a penalty for obligors who make less than \$39k per year (300% FPL). License suspensions for workers at that income level cannot be considered “appropriate” or increasing “effectiveness” as it (1) wastes taxpayer dollars in collections enforcement, (2) prohibits and eliminates access to employment for workers and job seekers, and (3) heightens tensions between the custodial parties which, in turn, decreases compliance rates. Therefore I urge a favorable report.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Shaneka Henson', written in a cursive style.

Delegate Shaneka Henson