

Dear Members of the House Judiciary Committee,

This testimony is being submitted by Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore, a group working to move white folks as part of a multi-racial movement for equity and racial justice in Baltimore City, Baltimore County, and Howard County. We are working in collaboration with Out for Justice and the Job Opportunities Task Force (JOTF). I am a resident of **District 40. I am testifying in support of House Bill 1293.**



This bill would end the practice of suspending driver's license for non-payment of child support for obligor's with income that is 300% of the federal poverty level or less. Currently, a driver's license can be suspended after two months of missed child support payments. In our regional economy where almost half of workers drive to jobs in another county, a license suspension can make it impossible for the non-custodial parent to access and keep a job. *Without a job, a non-custodial parent won't have the earnings to actually pay child support.* This can also negatively impact business owners who are already having difficulty finding employees. A license suspension can make it impossible for the non-custodial parent to visit their child, attend school events, or take their child to appointments. License suspensions reduce the amount of financial and emotional support that the non-custodial parent can provide.

Because driving is critical for many low-income workers, some non-custodial parents may continue to drive with a suspended license. This can lead to fines and penalties, which the non-custodial parent may be unable to pay. A driver's license suspension can spiral from unpaid fines to time in jail. It is yet another example of a system that criminalizes poverty.

An in-depth investigation by the Baltimore Sun in 2020 found child support non-payment penalties had a wide-ranging and damaging impact, especially on the poorest neighborhoods. Subsequently, the [Baltimore Sun Editorial Board](#) commented "And by all means: Leave licenses — professional and drivers' — alone. Nothing shows the folly of the system more, or proves the point that punishment has taken on too big a role, than targeting a parent's income earning potential. It's a child support system; supporting children should be the No. 1 goal."

We want Maryland children to grow up with financial and emotional support from caring adults. Punishing low-income workers with driver's license suspension creates yet another burden to maintaining a job and making child support payments. I am encouraging you to **vote in support of HB 1293.**

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,
Jonathan Smeton
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Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore