



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 139:

Driver's Licenses - Suspension for Child Support Arrearages - Exception

TO: Hon. William C. Smith, Chair, and Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Zachary Alberts, Senior Manager of Strategic Initiatives at the Center for Urban Families

DATE: February 7th, 2024

Good afternoon, my name is Zach Alberts. I am a resident of district 46 and the Senior Manager of Strategic Initiatives at the Center for Urban Families, a workforce and family strengthening program in Baltimore City. We urge you to support Senate Bill 139, which repeals the punitive and self-defeating practice of suspending driver's licenses for obligors making less than 250% of the Federal Poverty guidelines.

At the Center for Urban Families, we help individuals that live in the most underserved, underrepresented, and disconnected areas in Baltimore City. As you have heard in previous testimonies for both this bill and others, 92% of jobs in the Baltimore Metro area take an hour or more to get to on public transportation - that's IF the busses come on time. As our clients climb their way up the economic ladder, a car is more often than not their first significant purchase as it opens up a world of economic and parenting possibilities. Jobs that require driver's licenses, like qualifying for your CDL-B and operating an 18-wheeler, are some of the most popular paths out of poverty for our members because they have relatively low barriers to entry and pay upwards of \$80,000. These license suspensions unnecessarily and unproductively block access to high wage-earning employment.

A 2020 study by the Baltimore Sun found that the average child support arrearages of 1,700 non-custodial parents in CFUF's 21217 Zip Code was \$16,500. That is 45% of that zip code's annual median income. CFUF's clients' arrears are even higher at \$24,000 and those same parents reported being out of work 18 of the previous 24 months. Our clients are doing the right thing. They are striving to be better parents, better community members and better citizens. Suspending their license because they cannot keep up with a debt that is almost half their income doesn't make it more likely that they'll pay it off, it makes it less.

The purpose of child support laws is to help Maryland families and children. This practice only hurts them. I urge a favorable vote for bill 139. Thank you.

For more information, contact:

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