

February 7, 2024

The Honorable William Smith, Chair
Senate Judicial Proceedings
Senate Office Building, 3 East Miller
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: TESTIMONY ON SB0139 - DRIVER'S LICENSES - SUSPENSION FOR CHILD SUPPORT ARREARAGES - EXCEPTION - POSITION: FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS

Dear Chair Smith and Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee:

The Maryland Department of Human Services (DHS) thanks the Committee for the opportunity to provide favorable support for Senate Bill 139 (SB139). With offices in every one of Maryland's jurisdictions, DHS assists Marylanders in economic need, provides preventive services, and protects children and adults. The Child Support Administration (CSA) within DHS implements the child support program which is affected by SB139.

SB 139 is a reintroduction from the 2023 session. DHS worked with Senator Watson on consensus amendments. The language in SB 139 is identical to the bill as passed by the House on third reader last year. This year's amendments are the addition of a preamble.

We respectfully request a favorable report with these sponsor amendments.

We believe that the committee should support this bill because it ensures noncustodial parents (NCPs) with incomes equal to or less than 250% of the federal poverty guidelines, do not have their driver's licenses suspended because they have not fully complied with paying a child support order. Driver's licenses are an essential credential for education, work, and parenting.

The overall goal of DHS is to promote parental responsibility so that children receive support from both parents even when they live in separate households. We support the goal of SB139 to distinguish between, and treat appropriately, NCPs who are unwilling to meet their child support obligations and those who are unable to pay child support. DHS understands that NCPs who are unable to pay should not be subject to the limitations a suspended license would place on their access to education, training, and employment necessary to provide regular, consistent, and timely child support payments.

While SB139 may result in an initial decrease in child support collections, we are committed to changes that will reduce the impact on collections. We are intent on enhancing the child support automated system and creating new and easier to understand notices to obligors. We are also committed to implementing new early intervention strategies to build trust and develop relationships with NCPs to help prevent arrearages. We will make these changes in partnership with community organizations to both enhance and increase outreach efforts as we better communicate with the NCPs we serve and support.



If you require additional information, please contact Rachel Sledge, Director of Government Affairs, at rachel.sledge@maryland.gov.

In service,

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

Rafael López
Secretary