

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 0311/SENATE BILL 0174

Child Support – Suspension of Driver's Licenses

Judiciary Committee

Hearing: February 1, 2024

Position: FAVORABLE

TO: Members of the House Judiciary Committee and Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Donte Peoples

My name is Donte Peoples. I reside in **District 35A**. I support HOUSE BILL 0311/SENATE BILL 0174 to ensure driver's license suspensions are only used in appropriate cases, and to ensure other families are not harmed by the child support system the way my family has been harmed.

From 2014 – 2023 my driver's license was suspended 15 times for child support. Meanwhile, my son has been living with me for the majority of that time. I told the child support agency that my son lives with me, but they did nothing to help me.

In 2017, I got a court order from the Circuit Court terminating my obligation to pay child support because my son lives with me. I took this court order to the child support agency but they kept suspending my license on and off, and they kept garnishing my wages, even though the court order said they were supposed to close out my case. In 2022, I got a custody order from the Circuit Court granting me sole legal and physical custody of my son. Still, the child support agency kept suspending my driver's license. I pleaded with them to stop suspending my license and told them how badly it was affecting my work because I'm a truck driver. The caseworkers told me to make payments so they would reinstate my license, but they said they don't have control over it being suspended again or another suspension coming down the pike because it's all done through the computer. Well, if you don't have control over a machine then that's a huge problem.

I drive trucks for a living. These suspensions have caused me to lose jobs and to lose out on potential job opportunities. Many of the big trucking companies have rules where they don't even consider hiring you if you've had a license suspension in the last 3 years. This past summer, I thought my license was in good standing and I was out of state making a delivery for work to a military base. The military base does routine background checks before anyone can enter the property. Through this routine background check they informed me my driver's license was suspended. Because of this, I was not able to finish the work delivery, and I lost my contract with that trucking company.

After that, Maryland Legal Aid got involved. Through litigation they were finally able to get the child support agency to close out my child support case—something the court ordered them to do back in 2017. To say the child support system has had devastating effects on my family is a massive understatement. I'm trying to take care of my son, and this system that's

supposed to help families keeps doing everything they can to hurt my family. They have made it almost impossible for me to be able to care for my family financially. Every set back and frustration from them makes me want to give up, but I know I have to keep going for my son.

I hope these bills will help other families to not have to go through the hardships I went through at the hands of the child support agency. I urge a favorable report of HOUSE BILL 0311/SENATE BILL 0174, and I urge you to pass these bills to help families like mine, dads like me, and kids like my son. We don't deserve to be harmed by a government system that is supposed to be helping families.