



**MARYLAND**  
**LEGAL AID**

*Advancing*  
**Human Rights and**  
**Justice for All**

**Senate Bill 139**

**Driver's Licenses – Suspension for Child Support Arrearages – Exception  
In the Judiciary Committee  
Hearing on March 26, 2024  
Position: FAVORABLE**

*Maryland Legal Aid (MLA) submits its written testimony on SB139.*

MLA appreciates the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of SB139 and thanks Senator Watson and Delegate Toles for their work on this important issue. MLA is Maryland's largest private, civil non-profit law firm, providing free legal services to indigent Maryland residents. MLA assists low-income individuals and families in every Maryland county with a wide array of civil legal issues, including family law cases such as divorce, custody, child support, and domestic violence matters. In our family law cases, MLA represents mothers as well as fathers, and custodial as well as non-custodial parents.

Driver's license suspensions do not work as a child support enforcement mechanism for those who are living in poverty and do not have the ability to pay. They create an obvious barrier to employment. Parents need driver's licenses to secure and maintain employment so that they are able to pay child support. Most child support is collected through wage garnishment and tax refund intercepts. Both of these collection mechanisms require the parent to have lawful, steady employment—to which driver's license suspension is an impediment.

Driver's license suspensions also make it difficult to be an involved and active parent. Once the non-custodial parent's driver's license is suspended, they are unable to contribute in other ways—for example, picking the child up for visits, school, doctor's appointments, etc.

The current driver's license suspension system used by the Maryland Child Support Enforcement Agency criminalizes poverty, disproportionately harms low-income families, and contributes to the cycles of poverty we see every day in the families and communities that we serve. If this legislation is implemented correctly, and the Maryland Child Support Enforcement Agency stops suspending driver's licenses of parents who are below 250% of the poverty level, it would be a tremendous step towards tempering the harmful effects of the current system and helping low-income families escape the cycle of poverty.

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For these reasons, Maryland Legal Aid urges the Committee to issue a **FAVORABLE** report on SB139. If you have any questions, please contact Ameer Vora, Director of Advocacy for Family Law, at (443) 604-6186 or [avora@mdlaborg](mailto:avora@mdlaborg).