

January 22, 2025

Senator Ron Watson's Testimony on SB 15,
Child Support - Driver's License Suspension for Arrearages and Court Orders

Good afternoon, Chair Smith and Vice Chair Waldstreicher and members of the committee. I would like to bring up my panel of supporters for this bill. Senator Ron Watson here from the 23rd Legislative District and I am here to ask for your support for Senate Bill 15, "Child Support - Driver's License Suspension for Arrearages and Court Orders". The hearing on this bill should be quick and easy given that this committee along with the entire Senate voted favorably to pass this bill during our last session and this Committee has unanimously voted favorably on this bill during the previous 3 years.

This is a very simple bill that is aimed at stopping the suspension of driver's licenses for those who are delinquent on their child support payments if their incomes are at or below 250% of the Federal Poverty Level. The purpose of this bill is to clearly state that the state of Maryland intends to ensure that those parents who have the ability to pay, can and those who do not have the ability to pay are not unduly harmed, that's the summary in a nutshell.

This bill has two Provisions it says that anyone who makes less than 250% of the federal poverty guidelines cannot have their driver's license suspended. The Federal property guideline is right around 15,650 which puts that amount at \$38,000. So, if you're making less than \$38,000 and you fall behind on your child support payments, you cannot have your driver's license suspended.

The second thing that this alters is that the bill in his current capacity says if you are 60 days late you can have your driver's license taken however, you have up to 120 days to be late if you have a Commercial Driver's License (CDL). So, in one case, it recognizes that on the one hand, you have folks who need a driver's license to get to work and currently it totally disregards those who use their regular vehicle to get to work and don't have a CDL. This bill (SB 15) fixes this issue. Again, this is the same bill that has passed this chamber three times previously and I ask this Committee for a favorable report on SB 15 today.

With that, I'd like to turn it over to my panel of witnesses starting with Chris Dews with the Center for Urban Families and Mark Woodard.