

JOTF JOB OPPORTUNITIES TASK FORCE

Advocating better skills, jobs, and incomes

Testimony for Senate Bill 195

Family Law – Child Support

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

FROM: Job Opportunities Task Force

DATE: January 14, 2024

POSITION: Support with Amendments

The Job Opportunities Task Force (JOTF) is an independent, nonprofit organization that develops and advocates policies and programs to increase the skills, job opportunities, and incomes of low-wage workers and job seekers in Maryland. **JOTF supports Senate Bill 195, which alters provisions regarding penalties for individuals who have child support arrears, with amendments regarding the 250% federal poverty level provisions.**

Mobility is key in Maryland's regional economy. The Census Bureau reported that almost [40% of Marylanders travel outside their county for employment](#). This statistic is more pronounced for lower-income communities of color where there is a scarcity of jobs available by public transit. [Only 8.5% of jobs in the Baltimore region can be reached within one hour, one way by public transit](#). Thus, a valid driver's license and a vehicle are overwhelmingly critical for a noncustodial parent to maintain an income that can be used to make child support payments in the first place.

Additionally, [a report cited](#) by the Abell Foundation found that **42% of individuals who had their licenses suspended lost jobs as a result of the suspension, 45% of those who lost jobs could not find another job, and 88% of those who were able to find another job reported a decrease in income.**

Senate Bill 195 allows individuals who make under 250% of the federal poverty level (around \$38,000 for 2025) to ask for an exception from having their driver's license suspended for child support arrears. However, the burden is still placed on the individual to request that exemption. Current law already allows for individuals in arrears to request an exemption for license suspension if losing their license would be an undue burden. But in practice, most low-income individuals do not request that exemption even though they qualify. They often do not have stable residency, so mailing information to them is ineffective. And even if they do receive the notice, they often do not know how to navigate the process.

JOTF contends that resources that have historically been underutilized by disenfranchised populations due to systematic barriers are not effective avenues at all. As such, we are seeking an amendment that would require individuals in arrears who make under 250% of the FPL to be automatically exempt from license suspension. In addition, we are also requesting an amendment that would authorize the Child Support Administration to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Office of the Comptroller to share tax information so that the CSA can verify income levels to process automatic exemptions.

For these reasons, JOTF supports Senate Bill 195 with amendments and urges a favorable report for the amended bill.

For more information, contact:

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