



Advocating better skills, jobs, and incomes

Testimony for Senate Bill 15

Child Support - Driver's License Suspension for Arrearages and Court Orders

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

FROM: Job Opportunities Task Force

DATE: January 22, 2024

POSITION: Support

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 15, which would exempt those who earn 250% of the federal poverty level (≈\$38,000) or less from having their driver's license suspended for child support arrearages.**

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.

A Report from the Abell Foundation ([see here](#)) discusses in detail how suspending the driver's license of a low income individual hurts the obligor, the child and the family.

More than 20,000 obligors had their driver's license suspended in FY23, harming them and their families pursuant to existing law. It also harmed their employers, the state's economy, and the state's tax base.

Senate Bill 15 shifts the onus of burdensome legal processes away from disadvantaged, low income individuals. 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 when 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. SB 15 eliminates that issue by allowing for the exemption to be automatic; preventing additional unnecessary burdens from continually being placed on disenfranchised Marylanders.

For these reasons, JOTF supports Senate Bill 15 and urges a favorable report.

For more information, contact:

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