

Dear Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee,

This testimony is being submitted by Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore, a group of individuals working to move white folks as part of a multi-racial movement for equity and racial justice in Baltimore City, Baltimore County, and Howard County. We are working in collaboration with Out for Justice. I am a resident of District 12. I support SENATE BILL 15 to repeal the punitive practice of driver's license suspensions for lower-income obligors.



Showing Up for Racial Justice

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 necessary for economic sustainability.

In 2015, NPR reported that 62% of Marylanders who owe child support make less than minimum wage but owe at least \$10,000 in unpaid arrearages. They will never pay this debt, especially when the current law magnifies the issue by crippling their mobility. [Maryland Code Ann., Fam. Law § 10-119](#) states that upon 60 days of nonpayment of child support, an obligor shall have their license or privilege to drive suspended. Beyond this, [Maryland Code Ann., Transportation §16-303](#) states that driving on an invalid license (suspended, canceled, or revoked) in Maryland is a crime punishable by up to (1) one year in jail, a \$1000 fine, or both. Child support debt thus triggers a suspended driver's license, arrest, or hefty fines, further complicating the ability of low-wage workers to secure employment and make payments.

Data suggests that this issue is racialized as well, disrupting the lives of African Americans. Although Blacks comprise 31.1% of Maryland's population, [MDOT data suggests](#) they made up to 71% of the roughly 27,000 license suspensions between 2015 - 2020. If a disproportionately higher number of black Marylanders lack access to a valid driver's license due to license suspensions and are blocked from participating in a mobile economy, it stands to reason that current state policy is actively preventing them from making payments.

SENATE BILL 15 ends suspending licenses for child support arrears of those making less than 250% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) or \$38k annually. No evidence suggests suspending an individual's driver's license improves arrears collection for persons at this income level in the long run. Suspending licenses for lower-income obligors contradicts the stated purpose of increasing compliance in child support payments and engagement with family where appropriate. It cripples the primary way the Child Support Enforcement Agency can collect (wage garnishments) by eliminating access to employment needed to pay down arrears.

It is for these reasons that we urge a favorable report on SENATE BILL 15.

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