

SB015_AnnaRubin_FAV.pdf

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Position: FAV

SB015_Ann Rubin_FAV

Anna Rubin, Columbia MD 21045

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 15:

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

TO: Members of the House Judiciary Committee and Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Dr. Anna Rubin, Emerita Prof.. UMBC

ANNA RUBIN support(s) SENATE BILL 15 to repeal the punitive practice of driver's license suspensions for lower-income obligors. I am writing as a private citizen, involved in a number of Jewish organizations in the region as well as civic organizations. Jewish values emphasize extending help to those in the community who are lacking resources.

All workers in Maryland require mobility. 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. As such, child support debt 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, adversely 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. We urge a favorable report on SENATE BILL 15 for these reasons.

Sincerely,
Dr. Anna Rubin

SB0015_FAV_AprilleHamilton.pdf

Uploaded by: Aprille Hamilton

Position: FAV



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 15:

Driver's Licenses - Suspension for Child Support Arrearages - Exception

TO: Members of the House Judiciary Committee and Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Aprille Hamilton

My name is Aprille Hamilton, a resident of District 8, and I support Senate Bill 15 to ensure that driver's license suspensions for inability to pay child support are used in appropriate cases.

I have an 11-year-old daughter from a previous relationship and a one-year-old I am raising alone. I left my last relationship after surviving multiple domestic violence situations with my ex, the 11-year-old's father, and then moved out. It was not easy. I struggled to secure housing and ended up in a shelter.

At this point, I lost custody of my daughter, and my ex then placed me on child support, where I had my wages garnished and my license suspended. My quality of life plummeted significantly, and I had to reach back out to him, my abuser, and plead with him to drop the order, which he eventually did. I am blessed that the situation worked the way that it did, but no one should have to plead with their abuser to repeal a child support case.

Years later, I moved to Alaska to work as a waitress on a cruise ship. During this time, he placed me on child support again for my daughter, and because I was not in the state, I did not receive the court order to push back. I owe him over \$20,000 in arrears, and there is **no way** that I can pay this debt. My license has been in a constant cycle of suspension with a looming threat of incarceration for inability to pay.

I am also watching the DHS' Child Support Bill closely and disagree strongly with taking personal injury awards for inability to pay. I have a settlement coming my way from my former workplace for damages done to me, and I don't think that it is just to have that money forwarded immediately to my abuser.

I have been frantically searching for employment opportunities but am constantly denied because I do not have a license. If this bill were to pass, I could make a case in court, retrieve my license, and support my son. Please pass these bills!

SB0015_FAV_Daivd Reed.docx.pdf

Uploaded by: Ashley DeV Vaughn

Position: FAV



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 15

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

TO: Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings and House Judiciary Committees

FROM: David Reed

My name is David Reed, and I am here to provide testimony in strong support of Senate Bill 15, which addresses the suspension of driver's licenses for individuals in arrears on child support payments.

My personal experience demonstrates the severe and unnecessary hardship caused by the current system. In 2019, my driver's license was suspended due to child support arrears. This decision was made without proper notice—no letter, phone call, or communication. I discovered the suspension only when I was pulled over by law enforcement while on my way to work.

At the time, I had been living at the same address for two years, yet I never received any notice in the mail about the impending suspension. Ultimately, my license was restored, but not without significant time, loss of wages, and unnecessary inconvenience. I had to navigate a complex process, visiting both the Motor Vehicle Administration and the child support office, just to prove that my license should not have been suspended due to my disability status and reliance on government benefits.

This ordeal exposed significant flaws in the current system:

1. **Lack of Communication:** There was no prior notification before my license was suspended, even though my address was up to date, and I had resided at the residence for two years up to that point.
2. **Financial and Emotional Strain:** The suspension forced me to depend on others for transportation and caused unnecessary stress.
3. **Ineffectiveness as a Collection Tool:** Rather than investigating, suspending my license created barriers to earning income.

Under Senate Bill 15, these harmful consequences can be mitigated. By eliminating driver's license suspensions as a punitive measure for child support arrears, this legislation ensures that individuals can continue working and meeting their obligations.



It is important to note that the current system disproportionately impacts low-income individuals and those who rely on their vehicles for work and family responsibilities. SB 15 promotes a more equitable approach, allowing individuals to address their financial obligations without punitive measures that jeopardize their ability to do so.

I urge this committee to pass SB 15 to create a fairer and more just system that prioritizes communication, accountability, and the economic stability of Maryland residents. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
David Reed

MAJR_SUP_SB15_25RS.pdf

Uploaded by: Bill Carlson

Position: FAV

MARYLAND ALLIANCE FOR JUSTICE REFORM

Working to end unnecessary incarceration and build strong, safe communities



To: Chair Will Smith and Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee Members
From: Jennifer Zito and Bill Carlson, MAJR executive committee

January 20, 2025

The Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform (MAJR) asks you to support of SB 0015 - Child Support - Driver's License Suspension for Arrearages and Court Orders.

We believe SB 0015 is a sensible bill that will help correct a flaw in the current policies relating to driver's license suspension due to child support arrears. Under the current system an impoverished parent who is behind in their child support payments can have their driver's license automatically suspended. Driver's license suspensions do not work as an enforcement mechanism for those who are living in poverty and simply do not have the ability to pay. They create a barrier to employment and make it difficult to be an involved and active parent. The current system often has consequences that are not in the best interest of the child. Further, the punishment can paradoxically make the parent in arrears less able to make further child-support payments. Being handicapped by not being allowed to drive reduces the ability of parent to function. Or, choosing to drive with a suspended driver's license can create a ripple of further negative outcomes such as fines, arrest, and sometimes even imprisonment. The current system disproportionately affects low-income parents and families.

The basic approach taken by SB 0015 is harm reduction from the current system. SB 0015 prevents the Maryland Department of Human Services (DHS) from suspending a license if the obligor income is less than 250% of the federal poverty guidelines unless the obligator was judicially determined to enter this status voluntarily. It also provides a mechanism for DHS to learn the obligor's income from court filings in the child support orders.

The Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform (MAJR) is a nonpartisan, all-volunteer organization of nearly 2000 Marylanders who advocate for sensible evidence-based legislative and policy changes in Maryland's correctional practices. MAJR thanks you for the opportunity to provide input on this important legislation and urges the committee to give SB 0015 a favorable report.

SB0015 Child Support - Driver's License Suspension

Uploaded by: Catherine OMalley

Position: FAV

BILL NO: Senate Bill 0015
TITLE: Child Support - Driver's License Suspension for Arrearages and Court Orders
COMMITTEE: Judicial Proceedings
HEARING DATE: January 22, 2025
POSITION: **SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS**

Senate Bill 0015 would disallow the Child Support Agency from suspending a driver's license to enforce court ordered child support if the payor earns less than 250% of the Federal Poverty Level. The Women's Law Center understands that it is sometime counter-intuitive to deprive someone who owes money, in this case arrearages on child support, from the means to get to and from a job. In the appropriate circumstances it may be better to not suspend the license. SB0015 is a reasonable effort to balance the interests, but we have one concern.

The Child Support Agency (Agency) has the most robust ability to enforce a court order to pay child support, but it is limited. Suspension of a driver's license is one of the mechanisms they can use. SB0015 would create an exception to the Agency's enforcement mechanism of suspending an obligor's driver's license, depriving them of the ability to suspend a license of anyone who earns less than 250% of Federal Poverty level. There would be no discretion. We do not have the expertise to opine on whether tying this exception to the federal poverty level is better than tying it to a state barometer of some sort, and leave that to the policy makers. We also wonder how this works as it relates to number of family members. The income number changes depending on that fact.

However, we do have a concern that obligors may impoverish themselves in order to lower their income to whatever level is set for this exception to kick in. We suggest an amendment to provide that an obligor must be determined not to have voluntarily impoverished themselves before the Agency be completely deprived of this enforcement mechanism. We do not want single parents (more often women) of children left without financial resources they are due to help raise the child or children, if the obligor could actually be earning a greater amount of money and paying, but has chosen not to do so.

Therefore, the Women's Law Center of Maryland, Inc. urges a favorable report on Senate Bill 0015 with amendment.

The Women's Law Center of Maryland is a private, non-profit, legal services organization that serves as a leading voice for justice and fairness for women. It operates the statewide Family Law Hotline, serving thousands self-represented litigants a year on that line with information and referral.

SB0015 - Child Support - Driver's License Suspensi

Uploaded by: Christina Nemphos

Position: FAV

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 Maryland District 40, and live in the Medfield neighborhood of Baltimore. **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 black citizens 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.

Christina Bell
1301 W 42nd St., Baltimore, Md 21211
Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore

SB0015_FAV_OFJ_SIGNON.docx (1).pdf

Uploaded by: Christopher Dews

Position: FAV



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 15:

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

TO: Members of the House Judiciary Committee and Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee.

FROM: Christopher Dews, Policy Consultant (Representing Out for Justice)

Out for Justice, Inc. (OFJ) is an organization comprised of individuals directly and indirectly impacted by the criminal legal system advocating for reforming policies and practices that adversely affect successful reintegration into society. OFJ supports Senate Bill 15, which would repeal the punitive practice of driver's license suspensions for lower-income child support obligors.

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.

An Abell Foundation [report](#) found that across Maryland, 50 percent of noncustodial parents in the state child support program caseload were employed in 2017, and 43 percent of these earned minimum wages or less but owe an average of \$10,000 in unpaid arrearages. In Baltimore, where OFJ services most of its clients, 57 percent of noncustodial parents were employed, and 47 percent earned the minimum wages or less but owed an average of \$13,300 in unpaid arrearages. They will never pay down 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. Until [recently](#), driving on a license suspended for child support came with similar penalties. As such, child support debt triggers a suspended driver's license, arrest, or hefty fines, further complicating the ability of low-wage workers to secure employment and make payments.

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 (Voorhees, 2006).

[Federal Code 42 U.S.C.A. § 666 \(a\)](#) demands that all States have laws that “increase the effectiveness of the [child support enforcement] program which the state administers” and allows the State to withhold, suspend, or restrict licenses of individuals owing child support in [“appropriate cases” \(16\)](#). No evidence suggests suspending an individual’s driver’s license improves arrears collection for persons making less than 250% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) or \$38k annually. However, Maryland continues to suspend lower-income obligors, arguing a need to comply with federal law.

OFJ believes that driver’s license suspensions for workers who make less than \$38k annually cannot be considered “appropriate” or increasing “effectiveness” as it (1) wastes taxpayer dollars in collections enforcement, (2) prohibits and eliminates access to employment for workers and job seekers, and (3) heightens tensions between the custodial parties which, in turn, decreases compliance rates. As such, Maryland should pass Senate Bill 139 to repeal driver’s license suspensions as a penalty for obligors who make less than \$38k per year (250% FPL) and ensure that the state is not preventing obligors from securing the employment needed to pay their child support payments. California passed similar provisions with [SB1055](#) (2022), eliminating license suspensions for obligors with a household income at or below 70% of the county’s median income, which is far more expansive than our considerations.

If Maryland truly wants to stay in compliance with federal statutes regarding child support enforcement, the most effective way to accomplish this would be to ensure that all non-custodial parents have the financial standing to remain in compliance with their obligation. 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. We urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 15 for these reasons.

The Undersigned Organizations/Individuals Support of SB0015

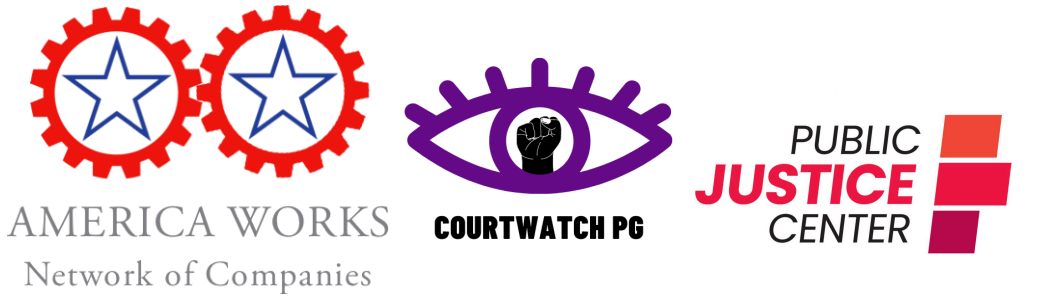
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| 1. Out for Justice | 16. HTP Homes |
| 2. Job Opportunities Task Force (JOTF) | 17. Helping Oppressed People Excel |
| 3. Winning Strategies | 18. Helping Ourselves Transform |
| 4. BetterU Construction Training | 19. Public Justice Center |
| 5. Maryland Legal Aid | 20. Civic Works Center for Sustainable Careers |
| 6. University of Baltimore School of Law | 21. 1199 SEIU |
| 7. Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service | 22. Baltimore Harm Reduction Coalition |
| 8. Center for Urban Families | 23. PIVOT Program |
| 9. Showing Up for Racial Justice | 24. Economic Action Maryland |
| 10. Office of the Public Defender | 25. Northeast Catholic Community |
| 11. Life After Release | 26. Baltimore Mutual Aid for Mental Health |
| 12. CASH Campaign of Maryland | 27. Marylanders Against Poverty |
| 13. America Works | 28. Cornerstone Full Gospel Church |
| 14. Court Watch PG | 29. Fines and Fees Justice Center |
| 15. Consumer Auto | |

For more information, contact:

Christopher Dews / Policy Consultant / Cdews@cgagroup.com / 301-412-5399

30. Baltimore Action Legal Team

31. John Harden



For more information, contact:
Christopher Dews / Policy Consultant / Cdews@cgagroup.com / 301-412-5399



For more information, contact:
Christopher Dews / Policy Consultant / Cdews@cgagroup.com / 301-412-5399

SB0015_FAV_CorrineBerry.docx.pdf

Uploaded by: Corrine Berry

Position: FAV

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 15:

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

TO: Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee and House Judiciary Committee

FROM: **Corrine Berry**

I am a resident of District 25, and I support Senate Bill 15 to eliminate driver's license suspensions for lower-income obligors. I think the system is currently unfair and has been used by scorned lovers for vengeance, which is what happened in my case.

I have a seven-year-old son who I am currently paying child support for. I am currently \$2200 in arrears and being charged \$300 monthly in child support.

My child's father placed me on child support out of revenge because he was toxic, and I did not want to be with him. We were happily together for about six years when my son was born. Thanks to his abusive character, drinking habits, and general disrespectfulness, I chose to separate from him. While I was struggling with breast cancer, he filed paperwork to take full custody of my son.

Thankfully, the judge granted us joint custody during the summer of 2022. During 2023, my ex claimed I was doing little to help my son as I didn't have the resources to provide since my job at the post office cut my hours. And he decided to file for child support. I was already taking care of my son, and after I was put on child support. My payments were directly for child support - none of those payments counted towards my arrears.

I support Senate Bill 15 as it would prevent vengeful people like my ex from taking advantage of the child support system to harm their significant others.

SB0015_FAV_DB_OFJ.docx.pdf

Uploaded by: D'wan Burton

Position: FAV



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF [SENATE BILL 15](#)

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

TO: Members of the House Judiciary Committee and Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Dwan Burton, Deputy Director of Out for Justice

As Deputy Director of Out for Justice, an organization dedicated to advocating for individuals impacted by the legal system. I am writing to express our strong support for **Senate Bill 15 (SB 15)**, which seeks to amend the conditions under which the Child Support Administration (CSA) can notify the Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA) to suspend an individual's driver's license due to child support arrearages. Specifically, SB 15 proposes to exclude obligors whose income does not exceed 250% of the federal poverty guidelines from such notifications under certain circumstances.

Our member base primarily consists of individuals who have been impacted by the criminal legal system. These individuals often face significant barriers to securing meaningful and adequate employment due to their criminal records. One of the critical factors that can mitigate these employment challenges is access to affordable and legal transportation. For many, a valid driver's license is essential for commuting to work, attending job interviews, and fulfilling family responsibilities.

Suspending driver's licenses for low-income obligors who are unable to meet child support payments exacerbates their financial instability. Without a license, these individuals may struggle to maintain employment or secure new job opportunities, further hindering their ability to fulfill child support obligations. This creates a detrimental cycle where the lack of a driver's license impedes income generation, leading to increased arrearages and potential legal consequences.

By implementing SB 15, Maryland would take a compassionate and pragmatic approach to child support enforcement. Excluding obligors earning up to 250% of the federal poverty level from driver's license suspensions acknowledges the economic realities faced by many and prevents further marginalization. This policy change would not only support the financial stability of low-income parents but also promote consistent child support payments, as individuals are more likely to meet their obligations when they have the means to do so.



Moreover, this legislation aligns with broader efforts to humanize and reform systems that disproportionately impact marginalized communities. It deters the further criminalization of individuals for economic hardships beyond their control and fosters an environment where they can contribute positively to society and their families.

In conclusion, Out for Justice strongly urges the Judicial Proceedings Committee to issue a favorable report on SB 15. This bill represents a meaningful step toward equitable child support enforcement and the removal of unnecessary barriers that prevent individuals from achieving economic self-sufficiency and supporting their children.

Thank you for considering our perspective on this critical issue. For these reasons and more, we urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 15.

SB 15.pdf

Uploaded by: Daryl Yoder

Position: FAV

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 15:

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

TO: Members of the House Judiciary Committee and Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee.

FROM: **Daryl Yoder**

Showing Up for Racial Justice, Baltimore

I support SENATE BILL 15 to repeal the punitive practice of driver's license suspensions for lower-income obligors.

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.

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Thank you,

Daryl Yoder
309 Glenmore Ave.
Catonsville, MD 21228

Testimony SB 15 Driver's License Suspension for Ch

Uploaded by: Delna Gray

Position: FAV

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.

DAD-VOCATE 01 20 25.pdf

Uploaded by: Eric Smith

Position: FAV

The Real Dadvocate



Winning Strategies: Fatherhood, The Courts & Custody, Incorporated

Contact Number – 443- 768-8158

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[Http://www.winningstrategiesfcc.org](http://www.winningstrategiesfcc.org)

January 20, 2025

Senators Anthony Muse & Ron Watson
Judicial Proceeding Committee
422 Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

Issue: Support for Senate Bills 0015 & 0106 - Child Support Suspension of Driver's License

The Real Dadvocate non-profit organization supports Senator Watson and Senator Muse's bills addressing inconsistencies in the formula used for deciding child support. These bills highlight the biased opinions that influence child support orders, which often position fathers as financial providers rather than co-parents. Judicial appointees, such as judges and magistrates, often show bias in their courtrooms, issuing orders drafted by law clerks that reinforce these prejudices.

The passing of Senate Bill 0015 and Senate Bill 0106 would be crucial in addressing inconsistencies within Maryland's family court system.

Department of Human Services Secretary Lopez has acknowledged that child support policies have evolved since their inception in 1975. However, social service workers of child protective agency workers and social workers have played a role in alienating fathers through their report findings, further exacerbating the issue.

The Orders from a judicial appointee make a father a child support payer rather than a co-parent, a sentiment that is echoed from the fathers we educate and empower on a regular basis.

Secretary Lopez also said in his letter dated January 14th that Senate Bill 0195 focuses on collecting child support payments from parents who can but are unwilling to pay. This assertion, however, is only partially true. Many fathers are willing to pay but face payment challenges due to inaccurate reporting about their presence and involvement. These inaccuracies often result in higher child support orders than necessary, as the formula used is based on flawed data. To rectify this, an extended investigation period is essential to address the misapplication of Title IV-D regulations which can be conducted during the extended investigation period, as well as adding an amendment that the investigation will not start until the father has made contact within 30 days of the decision

The Real Dadvocate

to place him on a child support order.

The Real Dadvocate's Step-Up Dad Program is dedicated to helping fathers navigate the court system and petition the Office of Administrative Hearings because the Child Support

Administration is faulty in communicating with fathers. Through this initiative, fathers are encouraged to request an investigation into their cases, specifically questioning how they were believed to be absent parents despite their involvement. Participants also address the mistaken decisions made by judges, contributing to their misrepresentation as absentee parents. Fathers who participated in the Step-Up Dad Program have responded overwhelmingly positively. The program empowers them to advocate for themselves and seek investigations into their cases. Although they face time constraints, the program educates them on the importance of putting their concerns in writing, which helps them articulate their positions effectively. The Real Dad Advocate non-profit organization is still committed to supporting fathers and advocating for systemic changes to ensure fairness in the child support system. Here are emails about the support for Senate Bills 0015 & 0106.

Sincerely

The Real Dadvocate

Cc: File

Support Of Legislation Bills



Maurice Stevenson
to me ▾

Fri, Jan 17, 7:35 PM (3 days ago) ☆ 😊 ↶ ⋮

Good evening, this is Maurice Stevenson Jr, I watched the video posted by Winning Strategies and The Real Dadvocate Eric. I am for supporting Senate Bills SB 0015 & SB 0106. I am against House Bill HB 0152 based on information provided in the videos. I hope this helps with the voting next week and positive changes!



Winning Strategies <winningstrategies.fcc@gmail.com>
to Maurice ▾

Sat, Jan 18, 1:41 AM (2 days ago) ☆ 😊 ↶ ⋮

Thank you Maurice



Senate and house bills



cshaunabear@aol.com
to me ▾

Sun, Jan 19, 11:00 AM (15 hours ago) ☆ 😊 ↶ ⋮

Supporting Senate bill 0015 and 0106 voting against house bill 0152 cshaunabear@aol.com

The Real Advocate

Supporting and Opposing Bills ➤ Inbox x

stpeter25@gmail.com

12:29 PM (3 hours ago)



to me ▾

Support SB 0015 & SB 0106 because I feel there needs to be an investigation on how and why child support is so much.

I Oppose HB 0152 because you are taking a parent's right away to voice how they believe custody should be for children.

I agree with you.

I signed the petition.

Good points.

Supporting and Opposing Bills ➤ Inbox x



Lambert P. Butler III

12:39 PM (3 hours ago)



to me ▾

Support SB 0015 & SB 0106 because I feel there needs to be an investigation on how and why child support is so much.

I oppose HB 0152 because you are taking a parents right away to voice how they believe custody should be for children

I agree with you.

I understand.

Good points.

Supporting the opposing Bill's ➤ Inbox x



Berni Peterson

12:41 PM (2 hours ago)



to me ▾

Support SB0015 and SB0106 because I feel there needs to be an investigation on how and why child support is so much !

I oppose HB0152 because you are taking a Parent's right away to voice on how they believe custody should be for children

I agree with you.

Good points.

I understand.

Supporting and opposing bills ➤ Inbox x



Stevie monie <newamericantattoo@gmail.com>

1:08 PM (2 hours ago)



to me ▾

I Support SB 0015 & SB 0106 because I feel there needs to be an investigation on how and why child support is so much.

I Oppose HB 0152 because you are taking a parent's right away to voice how they believe custody should be for children.

Thank you
Steven Vaughn

The Real Dadvocate

Supporting and Opposing Bills > Inbox x



cshaunabear@aol.com
to me ▾

3:11 PM (31 minutes ago) ☆ 😊 ↶ ⋮

Support SB 0015 and 0106 because I feel there needs to be an investigation on how and why child support is so much.

I Oppose HB 0152 because you are taking a parent's right away to voice how they believe custody should be handled.



SB0015 - Child Support - Driver's License Suspensi

Uploaded by: Erica Palmisano

Position: FAV

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.

Erica Palmisano
5580 Vantage Point Rd, Columbia, MD 21044
Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore

testimony2025sb15.pdf

Uploaded by: Franz Schneiderman

Position: FAV



Testimony to the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
SB 15 – Child Support -- Driver’s Licenses Suspension for Arrearages and Court Orders
Position: Favorable

The Honorable Will Smith
Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East, Miller Senate Building
Annapolis, MD 21401
cc: Members, Judicial Proceedings Committee

Jan. 22, 2025

Dear Chairman Smith and Committee Members,

I’m a consumer advocate and Executive Director of Consumer Auto, a non-profit group that works to foster safety, transparency, and fair treatment for Maryland drivers and car buyers.

We support **SB 15** because it will protect many low- and middle-income drivers who owe child support against the burdensome and counter-productive punishment of losing their right to drive – a sanction that not only can put lower-income Maryland drivers at risk of serious further punishment but undermines their ability to earn a living and, ultimately, to meet their child support obligations.

Paying child support is an important obligation. But for many lower-income, non-custodial parents, it’s a difficult burden to meet. As a 2019 Abell Foundation report found, many noncustodial parents “struggle to find and maintain full-time work at sufficient wages to support themselves and pay their child support obligations.”¹ With the median income of non-custodial parents statewide less than \$23,000 and 25% receiving supplemental food benefits (as the Abell report found in 2019²), it’s not surprising that many parents fall behind in their child support payments.

And when that happens, Maryland law makes it very easy for them to lose their licenses, allowing driver’s licenses to be suspended when parents are 60 days behind in their payments. But when a parent loses the right to drive, that only makes it harder for him or her to get to work and access the job opportunities that could enable them to meet their needs and child support obligations. This is especially true in Baltimore City, where weak public transit systems and the movement of many job centers to the suburbs makes it very difficult and time-consuming to reach remunerative work without a vehicle.

Indeed the Abell Foundation report found that 42% of those who lost their licenses also lost their jobs, and that 45% of those who lost jobs struggled to find another.³

¹ https://abell.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Child20Support20Report202_20_202020edits2020-20web20version.pdf

² Ibid,

³ Ibid.



Auto Consumer Alliance
13900 Laurel Lakes Avenue, Suite 100
Laurel, MD 20707

Once a person's license is suspended, he or she is also subject to a up to one year in jail and a \$1,000 fine for driving on a suspended or revoked license. When people violate the law by driving – as many people do, in part because they need to do so to meet their obligations – that can extend a cycle of poverty and punishment that often leaves people with even greater legal difficulties, more deeply in debt – and less able to pay their child support and meet other needs.

Suspending the licenses of lower-income Marylanders who owe child support adds to their financial and legal challenges as it undermines their ability to pay their debts and to support themselves and their families.

That's part of the reason the Abell Foundation report recommended stopping the practice of suspending the driver's licenses of lower-income Marylanders who owe child support.⁴ And why, as **SB 15** mandates, it makes good sense to end the practice of doing so for Marylanders who make 250% of federal poverty level wages or less.

We support SB 15 and ask you to give it a FAVORABLE report.

Sincerely,

Franz Schneiderman
Consumer Auto

⁴ Ibid.

SB0015_FAV_OFJ_JonathanWilliams.pdf

Uploaded by: Jonathan Williams

Position: FAV



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 15
Child Support - Driver's License Suspension for Arrearages and Court Orders

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

FROM: Jonathan Williams

My name is Jonathan Williams, and I live in Baltimore City. I support Senate Bill 15 - Child Support - Driver's License Suspension for Arrearages and Court Orders.

I am a father of a 5-year-old whose mother placed me on child support. After we signed the child support order, we had to wait 6 months for the judge to sign before the order went into effect. I was initially given misleading and/or incomplete information. I was told that I would be unable to make child support payments until the judge signed the order and that payments would not start until the order was signed. The judge eventually signed the order in August of 2017. It wasn't until I got a notice that my license for child support arrears of over \$9000 was suspended. When I signed the order, I knew my monthly payments would be \$840, and court fees would be included. Once the court fees were paid, the costs would drop down to \$640 per month.

At the time, I was bringing home around \$2600 monthly as an IT Site Coordinator. I started driving for Uber part-time to supplement my income and help pay my child support when the time came. Both jobs required that I have a valid driver's license. My expenses at the time included a \$1200 mortgage, \$500 car payment, \$160 car insurance, \$250 utilities, \$200 for gas, groceries, and miscellaneous purchases. At the end of the month, I had about \$300 left over. While driving for Uber, I averaged about \$20 per hour, which would have given me a max of \$800 per month in extra income.

The immediate arrival of a \$9000+ bill was a huge setback. It was unexpected and instantly put me in a financial bind.

When I contacted The Department of Human Resources, no one I talked to cared even to listen and understand my situation. I would get similar statements - "You can get your license reinstated when you pay all of your back pay," or "You should have saved the money during those months." It appeared that I wouldn't get any assistance until I paid what was owed. At this point, I gave up because doing the right thing seemed more like a punishment than getting monetary help for my son.



The website even states: *“You have the right to request a review for a modification if there has been a change in circumstances since the order was entered, or if three years have passed since the order was entered or last reviewed for modification. Examples of changes in circumstances that may be grounds for a modification are significant changes in income, changes in work-related daycare costs, changes in health care costs, a change in custody, or a change in the child's financial needs. Contact the Customer Care Center at 1-800-332-6347 for additional information.”*

Nothing in this paragraph was even considered for discussion when I called DHS.

The result was that I had to short-sell my house before it went into foreclosure, and my car was voluntarily repossessed. I can't drive my car because my license is suspended, so I can't drive for Uber to earn the extra money to afford my house and car and pay my child support. Not having a license has prevented me from finding a high-paying job because those jobs are not readily available in Baltimore City.

The repossession resulted in an extra \$9000 of debt over the \$8000 I already owed. At this point, I'm now \$17000 in debt and have lost two jobs. I've lost my home, car, and job and am in debt. This domino effect had me a couple of steps away from going to jail for not paying child support. How can someone pay child support when they have lost every means of paying it?

My testimony sheds some light on and understanding of what many parents have gone through and are going through. The rules and regulations, as they currently are, in some situations, hurt more than help. Please consider that some parents want the best for their child(ren) and that situations like mine are sensitive and need the flexibility to be negotiated. Situations like this can be avoided in the future if more than just income is factored into the child support process so a better judgment can be made before punishment is handed down that is a detriment to all parties involved. Your consideration of these matters and solutions is very much appreciated.

Senate Bill 15 starts to fix the issue for lower-income people by allowing an exemption to license suspensions for those making less than \$38,000 annually. This is a good move to prevent catastrophes like what I went through. I urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 15.

SB 15 - Child Support - Driver's License Suspensio

Uploaded by: Kam Bridges

Position: FAV

JOTF JOB OPPORTUNITIES TASK FORCE

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:

Kam Bridges / Senior Public Policy Advocate / Kam@jotf.org

SB0015_FAV_KhimauniSelden.docx.pdf

Uploaded by: Khimauni Selden

Position: FAV



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 15

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

TO: Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings and House Judiciary Committees

FROM: Khimauni Selden

My name is Khimauni Selden. I am a resident of District 42 in Baltimore County, and I support Senate Bill 15.

I am a father of two beautiful little girls I love and care for. My eldest daughter's mother placed me on child support when our baby was only a few months old. At the time, I was shocked at the situation – given that I had repeatedly offered to provide for our daughter and assured her mother that all she had to do was ask for what she needed. It became clear that she was unwilling to compromise unless I put cash directly in her hands or that I was on child support.

At my first court hearing, I arbitrarily agreed to pay roughly \$350 a month in child support on the assumption that I would be able to further negotiate in front of the judge. It quickly became apparent that no further discussion was allowed on the matter – no one was willing to hear anything I had to say. Since that initial court decision, my monthly child support allocations have increased to \$511 a month without allowing me to speak on the matter. Specifically, the court has not considered that I am a custodial parent for my youngest daughter and the breadwinner of my household.

Since I was first placed on child support, I have looked far and wide for a well-paying job to support my children and my current household. However, because my license has been suspended, I have been unable to make meaningful changes to my living situation. The only well-paying job I could find—working for Amazon—was outside my neighborhood. However, with a suspended license, I could not work this job and took a lower-paying local job with insufficient hours.

Further, I desire to have a relationship with my eldest daughter, whom, despite all the child support I pay, I am not allowed to see. I was told to go to court and obtain visitation rights—but how? I have no car, a job, or a family to support without the added Uber fees that it would require. Heading to court is a hefty undertaking that, without a license, I frankly cannot do at this time.



While I can acknowledge that some fathers may be unwilling to provide for and support their children, there should be compassionate and appropriate avenues for the fathers who care to be able to speak for themselves and find a middle ground on child support. This situation, and the stagnation caused by my lack of a driving license, has taken a hefty toll on my family's mental health.

Senate Bill 15 tremendously aids lower-income constituents like myself by allowing exemption license suspensions for those making less than \$38,000 annually. This move would prevent the years of difficulties I experienced. For this reason, I urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 15.

Sincerely,

Khimauni Selden

SB0015_FAV_MarkusRobinson.docx.pdf

Uploaded by: Marcus Robinson

Position: FAV

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 15

TO: Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee and House Judiciary Committee

FROM: **Markus V. Robinson**

I support Senate Bill 15, which prevents license suspensions for poor obligors.

I have lived in Maryland, specifically Prince George's County, since 2000. I have been a non-custodial parent in the child support enforcement process since approximately 2015. Since then, I have had several experiences with child support determination and subsequent enforcement that do not provide equity or fairness to the non-custodial parent.

Making all the changes needed to achieve parental equity in child support in Maryland is indeed a large and complex task, but one that is not impossible. It reminds me of the old joke, "How do you eat an elephant?" The answer is "one bite at a time." Senate Bill 106/House Bill 110 is one of those bites.

With the strongest urging possible, I say this effort must pass and be enacted by the state legislature. Vehicle transportation is a pillar in the lives of so many parents; to strip it away by suspending the ability to drive back and forth to employment that allows them to comply with court-ordered support without a judicial review of the circumstances is counterproductive to the desired outcome.

Please pass Senate Bill 15. I urge a favorable report.

SB 15 - Child Support - Driver's License Suspensio

Uploaded by: Mark Woodard

Position: FAV



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.**

Many jobs for those living in Baltimore city are in surrounding counties and consequently to get to these jobs, a car and a driver's license is required. If a person does not have a car or a driver's license they cannot get to their job, and without their job they have no income, and without their income they cannot pay their child support. Thus taking a low income person's driver license away is harmful to the obligor, the custodial parent and the child. It is counterproductive.

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.

The 250% language as a basis for the obligor to object and request an investigation and a hearing as proposed by SB 195 would become just one more factor that in practice does not occur. That is the reason why Senator Watson has brought this legislation forward in this committee for multiple years and the committee has consistently shown that it concurs by passing out this legislation multiple years in a row. JOTF requests that the Judicial Proceedings Committee will do so once more.

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

For more information, contact:

Mark Woodard / Senior Public Policy Advocate / Mark@jotf.org

SB 0015- Maryland Legal Aid- FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Meaghan McDermott

Position: FAV

Senate Bill 0015

**Child Support – Driver’s License Suspension for Arrearages and Court Orders
In the Judicial Proceedings Committee
Hearing on January 22, 2025
Position: FAVORABLE**

Maryland Legal Aid (MLA) submits its written and oral testimony on SB 0015.

MLA appreciates the opportunity to testify in support of this vital legislation. MLA is a private, nonprofit law firm that provides free legal services to thousands of low-income Maryland residents in civil matters. MLA represents both custodial and non-custodial parents in family law cases. In doing this work, we have found that wrongful driver’s license suspensions for alleged child support arrears are a recurrent and widespread problem. Driver’s license suspensions disproportionately harm low-income families, and the Maryland Child Support Enforcement Agency (“CSA”)’s automated driver’s license suspension system fails to reliably provide notice and the opportunity for a hearing prior to license suspension.

Driver’s license suspensions are not effective as a child support enforcement mechanism for those who are living in poverty and do not have the ability to pay. License suspensions create a barrier to employment and make it difficult to be an involved and active parent. Once a parent’s driver’s license is suspended, they are unable to contribute in other ways—for example, transporting their child to school, doctor’s appointments, visits with family, etc. Further, most child support is collected through wage garnishment and tax refund intercepts. These collection mechanisms both require the parent to have lawful, steady employment—to which driver’s license suspension is an impediment.

Three bills have been introduced to Maryland’s legislative body this session presenting potential solutions to this problem. **SB 0106**, directly addresses MLA’s concerns about the lack of due process within the current suspension system. It presents a systemic fix, where a parent’s driver’s license could only be suspended after a judicial determination of appropriateness has been made, based on a number of factors that take into account the parent’s ability to pay and the individual circumstances of the family as a whole. **SB 0015** does not directly address the due process concerns, but it creates a much-needed exemption to license suspension for low-income parents that, if implemented correctly, would help MLA clients and low-income communities tremendously. **SB 0195** also addresses the harms of license suspensions for low-income families, but, rather than creating an affirmative exemption to screen out low-income parents as SB 0015 does, it allows parents to request an investigation of the suspension based on their low-income status.

SB 0015 seeks to significantly reduce the number of license suspensions by exempting parents with incomes “not greater than 250% of the federal poverty guidelines” from driver’s license suspension. This would aid low-income families by tempering the harmful effects of driver’s license suspensions.

The numbers and the absence of due process.

In 2023, the MVA, at the express direction of CSA, suspended 20,512 licenses for alleged child support arrears. **Of those 20,512 suspensions, only 34 hearing requests** were made to the Office of Administrative Hearings (“OAH”). This astonishing disparity is a predictable consequence of CSA’s consistent failure to inform parents of their rights¹ to request an investigation, to receive a decision with the results of said investigation in writing, and to appeal that decision to OAH. Failure to inform parents of those rights violates constitutional due process, Md. Code, Family Law § 10-119, and COMAR 07.07.15.05. Certainly, if parents were informed of their right to request a hearing with OAH prior to suspension, more than 34 hearing requests would have been made out of the 20,512 suspensions in 2023.

“Adequate notice is integral to the due process right to a fair hearing because the ‘right to be heard has little reality or worth unless one is informed.’” *Mullane v. Cent. Hanover Bank & Tr. Co.*, 339 U.S. 306, 314 (1950).

Many parents have no idea their license is suspended until they are pulled over for a traffic stop.

What would have been a minor traffic violation then turns into a criminal citation. A criminal citation serves as another barrier to employment and carries with it collateral consequences ranging from their car being impounded, job loss, missed shifts and lost wages, court dates, points on their license, increased insurance costs, fines, and even incarceration. Not receiving notice prior to suspension is especially common for low-income parents, as they often do not have a stable home or mailing address.

The current automated system keeps many low-income parents in a perpetual cycle of threatened or actual license suspension.

On its face, the current law already has enumerated exceptions that limit when CSA can suspend driver’s licenses. The text of Md. Code, Family Law § 10-119 has exceptions for parents who have a disability, parents who are making consistent payments on their arrearage balance per a payment agreement, and parents who need their license for employment. But MLA regularly sees clients who fit squarely into an exception and still have their driver’s license suspended.

¹ Md. Code, Family Law § 10-119 and COMAR 07.07.15.05

MLA assists clients who fall under exceptions in the law with license reinstatement. However, reinstatement is merely a temporary solution. If the parent still has an arrearage balance of 60 days or more, it is only a matter of time before they are re-selected and again referred to the MVA for suspension. We must warn clients to be on constant alert of being re-selected for suspension by the automated system used by CSA to suspend driver's licenses.

Adding this exemption for low-income parents will help children and families by making license suspensions more effective as a child support enforcement mechanism. Targeting those who have the ability to pay would allow CSA to focus their resources on pursuing those specific cases where the parent is purposefully hiding or withholding money, or voluntarily impoverishing themselves.

The current system does not protect parents from license suspension when custody has changed and the former non-custodial parent is now the primary caretaker of the child.

Child custody can change rapidly in low-income families. For example, custody may vary depending on which parent has more reliable housing or income at any given point in time. While a change in custody might happen overnight, a legal modification of a custody or child support order in the Circuit Court takes at minimum a year, and often longer. For low-income parents who cannot afford attorneys, navigating the court system is extremely difficult. What is already a long process can be made more complicated if the other parent does not have a stable address where they can be properly served. It is sometimes while waiting on this lengthy court process that MLA clients (who now have custody of their child) have their license suspended.

MLA clients have their licenses suspended and are often denied reinstatement requests by CSA, even when:

- Custody has changed, and the child now lives with them;
- They are making payments towards their arrearage balance;
- They need their driver's license for their current job or a potential job opportunity or interview;
- The suspension causes them to lose their job;
- They have a verified disability and inability to work and make payments; and
- They need their license to be an involved and active parent.

The following are examples of MLA clients who have suffered the harmful consequences of improper and inappropriate driver's license suspension:

- Mr. R is an MLA client who was granted sole custody of his daughter in the Juvenile Court, after the mother was found to be unfit due to abuse and neglect. He provided a copy of the custody order to CSA, showing that custody had changed and he is now the custodial parent. **Mr. R's driver's license was still suspended**, which he learned only after being pulled over for a minor driving infraction. **Mr. R received a criminal citation for driving on a suspended license.**
- Mr. P is an MLA client who was granted sole custody of his son in the Circuit Court. The Circuit Court also granted Mr. P's request to officially terminate his obligation to pay child support, in light of the change in custody. Mr. P provided copies of the court orders to CSA, but **his driver's license was still suspended**. Mr. P drives trucks for a living, and **he was terminated from his job** due to his suspended license.
- Mr. G is an MLA client who drives rideshare. Mr. G provided proof to CSA of his weekly Uber rides and the fact that **license suspension would cause him to lose his employment** and therefore his income, but CSA refused to lift his license suspension unless he made a large lump sum payment.
- Mr. M is an MLA client whose children are all now adults. He still owes child support arrears, but he is disabled and his only source of income is Supplemental Security Income ("SSI") disability benefits. Mr. M has been threatened with license suspensions **five times in a one-year period**. Each time, he goes to his local child support office and provides proof of his disability and continued receipt of SSI. CSA requires him to make a lump sum payment to have his license reinstated, despite the fact that he is supposed to be excepted from license suspension under Maryland law, and SSI is exempt from collections for child support under both Maryland and federal law.

SB 0015 will ensure Maryland's compliance with federal law.

Concerns have been raised about Maryland's federal funding, but this bill will in no way negatively impact Maryland's federal funding. The controlling federal laws, 42 U.S.C. §§

666(a)(16) and 654(20), require only that states have the authority to suspend or restrict driver's licenses "*in appropriate cases,*" to "increase the effectiveness of the program." By exempting parents who are 250% below the federal poverty line, SB 0015 makes clear that it is not appropriate to suspend driver's licenses in situations where the suspension will hurt, rather than help, families. This bill will help to stop the inappropriate and erroneous suspensions that have harmed MLA clients, such as the ones described above.

This bill is also in line with the 2020 legislation introduced by then-Attorney General Frosh and passed by the Maryland legislature that stopped the MVA from suspending driver's licenses for fines and fees. The logic behind the passage of that legislation was simple: people need driver's licenses to secure and maintain employment so that they are able to pay their fines and fees. That simple logic applies here: **parents need driver's licenses to secure and maintain employment so that they are able to pay their child support.**

The purpose of the child support enforcement program is to increase economic stability for children and families, but CSA's current driver's license suspension system, which ensnares and punishes every parent who falls behind 60 days or more on child support, **perpetuates the cycle of poverty** for low-income families. If this legislation is implemented correctly, it would have long-term positive impacts on low-income communities and on Maryland's economy as a whole.

However, given that the current automated system used by CSA to suspend licenses presently does not screen for whether parents fall into one of the existing statutory exceptions, MLA has serious concerns about the implementation of this bill. **In order to accomplish the true systemic impact that is intended from this bill, it must be properly implemented by requiring CSA to affirmatively exempt and screen out those who are 250% below the federal poverty guidelines from their automated system.**

Therefore, MLA urges the committee to give a favorable report to this bill, SB 0015, and also urges the committee to consider further requirements or oversight of the implementation. MLA also urges the committee to consider the joint passage of SB 0106, which would remove the current automated system and therefore ensure that this bill, and the exemption for low-income parents, is properly implemented. Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on this important legislation.

If you have any questions, please contact:

Meaghan McDermott
Advocacy Director for Community Lawyering and Development
mmcdermott@mdlaborg
443-986-1810

SB15

Uploaded by: Rachel Sledge

Position: FAV



Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Rafael López, Secretary

January 22, 2025

The Hon. Will Smith, Chair
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

**RE: TESTIMONY ON SB0015 - CHILD SUPPORT - DRIVER'S LICENSE SUSPENSION
FOR ARREARAGES AND COURT ORDERS - POSITION: INFORMATIONAL ONLY**

Dear Chair Smith and Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee:

The Maryland Department of Human Services (DHS) thanks the Committee for the opportunity to provide a letter of information regarding Senate Bill 15 (SB 15). The bill would remove parents with lower incomes from early engagement with resources that could help when a parent experiences challenges meeting their child support obligations. After the January 14, 2025 hearing on our Department's bill, SB 195, we met with Senator Watson to discuss the Child Support Driver's License Suspension program.

With offices in every one of Maryland's jurisdictions, DHS empowers Marylanders to reach their full potential by providing preventative and supportive services, economic assistance, and meaningful connections to employment development and career opportunities. Our Child Support Administration (CSA) implements the child support program affected by SB 15. This legislation impacts the Driver's License Suspension program, a tool leveraged to increase engagement with non-custodial parents who have arrears and are unable to pay. Senate Bill 15 would exclude noncustodial parents who fall at or below 250 percent of the federal poverty guidelines from referral to the Driver's License Suspension (DLS) program.

We agree that parents unable to pay child support because of low income should be excluded from the DLS program. We believe the intention to exclude parents unable to pay is best served by our Department's bill, Senate Bill 195 (SB 195). SB 195 would

exclude parents CSA knows are unable to pay from referral to Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration for the purpose of suspending a driver's license.

When parents are out of compliance with a child support order and engage with CSA, they have opportunities to explain their circumstances, correct out-dated information, and right-size their child support orders. SB 15 would exclude parents CSA knows are unable to pay from otherwise statutorily required engagement when a parent is in arrears. Our bill would continue to include parents with low incomes in statutorily required outreach to engage with CSA while exempting the parents from the DLS program. Moreover, SB 195 would create more opportunities for CSA to determine when a parent meets the requirements for exclusion from the DLS program by engaging the parent to update information only the parent has, like the size of their household and whether a multi-family adjustment applies. SB 195's emphasis on engagement with parents is an example of the Family Matters approach we are taking across our department and with our sister agencies.

We agree it is critical to distinguish between parents who cannot pay child support and parents who will not pay. We agree that parents experiencing poverty should not be penalized by a driver's license suspension. However, we don't want to continue with out-dated information or leave parents without support when they are unable to pay. Noncustodial parents can fall further into arrears without regular engagement with CSA which updates our information, and facilitates access to employment programs, supportive services, and the child support Payment Incentive Program.

Child support orders include the requirement that parents proactively inform the Child Support Administration of a substantial change in income. When parents provide updated income and household information we are able to determine whether they meet the threshold of at or below 250 percent of the federal poverty guidelines. Federal poverty guidelines are determined by a combination of income and household size. Even if CSA verifies income with sister agencies, the only way to determine household size is through engagement with the parent. SB 15 would require CSA to determine whether a parent is exempt from the Driver's License Suspension program based on income information alone. That is not possible unless CSA proactively reaches out to every parent in arrears whose known income appears to be at or below 250% of poverty to inquire about household size. CSA estimates it would need an additional 29 caseworkers to confirm and process whether a noncustodial parent in arrears meets federal income and household size thresholds.

The Department supports the policy objective of SB 15 and is committed to distinguishing between parents who are unable to pay and parents who are unwilling to pay a child support obligation when implementing non-payment disincentives like the Driver's License Suspension program. Both SB 15 and SB 195 make the appropriate distinction. When combined with our commitment to implementing

administrative and information system changes, SB 195 ensures that our mutual policy objectives will be effectuated faster.

We appreciate the opportunity to offer informational testimony to the Committee as you consider how best to modernize child support in Maryland. Our bill, SB 195, requires more equitable implementation of the Driver's License Suspension program, encourages parental engagement so CSA information is up to date, and maintains parental opportunities for receiving help. When child support orders are equitable and parents have help when they need it, parents can avoid arrearages and collection actions while improving payment consistency and reliability.

We believe our Departmental bill, SB 195, would effectuate our shared policy objectives, ensure we remain compliant with federal statutory and regulatory requirements, and better serve Maryland's children, parents, and families. If you require additional information, please contact Rachel Sledge, Director of Government Affairs, at rachel.sledge@maryland.gov.

In service,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rafael López', written in a cursive style.

Rafael López
Secretary

SB0015_FAV_OFJ.docx.pdf

Uploaded by: Trina Selden

Position: FAV



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 15:

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

TO: Members of the House Judiciary Committee and Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Trina Selden, Executive Director

Out for Justice, Inc. (OFJ) is an organization comprised of individuals directly and indirectly impacted by the criminal legal system advocating for reforming policies and practices that adversely affect successful reintegration into society. OFJ supports Senate Bill 15 as amended to repeal the punitive practice of driver's license suspensions for lower-income obligors.

Mobility is key in Maryland's regional economy. The Census Bureau reported that [almost 50% of Marylanders travel outside of 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. In fact, only [9% of jobs in the Baltimore region can be reached within one hour, one way by public transit](#). Thus for economic sustainability, both a valid driver's license and a vehicle are necessary.

An Abell Foundation [report](#) found that across Maryland, 50 percent of noncustodial parents in the state child support program caseload were employed in 2017, and 43 percent of these earned minimum wages or less but owe an average of \$10,000 in unpaid arrearages. In Baltimore, 57 percent of noncustodial parents were employed and 47 percent earned the minimum wages or less but owed an average of \$13,300 in unpaid arrearages. They will never pay down 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. Until [recently](#), driving on a license suspended for child support came with similar penalties. As such, child support debt triggers a suspended driver's license, arrest, or hefty fines, further complicating the ability of low-wage workers to secure employment and make payments.

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 that were able to find another job reported a decrease in income** (Voorhees, 2006).



There is no evidence that suggests suspending an individual's driver's license improves the collection of arrears for persons making less than 300% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) or \$41k annually. However, Maryland continues the practice of suspending lower-income obligors arguing a need to comply with federal law.

OFJ believes that driver's license suspensions for workers who make less than the amended \$37k annually cannot be considered "appropriate" or increasing "effectiveness" as it (1) wastes taxpayer dollars in collections enforcement, (2) prohibits and eliminates access to employment for workers and job seekers, and (3) heightens tensions between the custodial parties which, in turn, decreases compliance rates. As such, Maryland should pass Senate Bill 164 to repeal driver's license suspensions as a penalty for obligors who make less than \$37k per year (250% FPL).

If Maryland truly wants to stay in compliance with federal statutes regarding child support enforcement, the most effective way to accomplish this would be to ensure that all non-custodial parents have the financial standing to remain in compliance with their obligation. Suspending licenses for lower-income obligors runs counter to the stated purpose of increasing compliance in child support payments and engagement with family where appropriate. In fact, it cripples the primary way the Child Support Enforcement Agency can collect (wage garnishments) by eliminating access to employment needed to pay down arrears. For these reasons and more, we urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 15.

SB15 Lwfgislative Black Caucus of Md, Inc.

Uploaded by: Ufuoma Agarín

Position: FAV



LEGISLATIVE BLACK CAUCUS OF MARYLAND, INC.

The Maryland House of Delegates, 6 Bladen Street, Room 300, Annapolis, Maryland 21401
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Ufuoma O. Agarin, J.D.

January 22, 2025

Chairman William C. Smith, Jr.
Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Chairman Smith and Members of the Committee,

The Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland offers strong favorable support for Senate Bill 15 (SB0015) – Child Support – Driver’s License Suspension for Arrearages and Court Orders. This bill introduces critical updates to the process for suspending driver’s licenses due to child support arrearages and establishes fairer requirements for enforcement while protecting the rights of low-income individuals. **This bill is on the 2025 legislative priority agenda of the Black Caucus.**

Comparative studies conducted by researchers at Brown University and the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia found that 91% of license suspensions are for non-driving-related events. Coupled with the majority of non-driving-related suspensions being most common in low-income communities with a high-proportion of black and minority residents, drivers license suspensions without consideration towards systemic barriers often exacerbates existing systemic challenges such as underemployment and barriers to stable work.

Additionally, current penalties for overdue child support payments do not require the Child Support Administration (CSA) to notify the non-custodial parent before initiating license suspensions which further undermines the economic stability of Black families, compounding cycles of poverty and financial insecurity.

To address these inequities, Senate Bill 15 first mandates that the CSA notify individuals before initiating license suspensions, including written notices with information on how to appeal or request investigations, safeguarding individuals from being unfairly penalized due to administrative errors or circumstances beyond their control.

Senate Bill 15 also mandates that the CSA notify individuals before initiating license suspensions, including written notices with information on how to appeal or request investigations, safeguarding individuals from being unfairly penalized due to administrative errors or circumstances beyond their control.

Furthermore, Senate Bill 15 includes provisions for work-restricted licenses, increases the threshold for license suspension from 60 to 120 days of noncompliance, and exemptions for individuals with annual incomes at or below

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250% of the federal poverty level unless they are found to be voluntarily impoverished.

These stipulations help protect vulnerable families from unnecessary hardships by providing individuals a more reasonable timeframe to fulfill their obligations and allow individuals to maintain employment while addressing their child support obligations.

The bill's emphasis on fairness and transparency in enforcement aligns with the Caucus' commitment to advancing public policies that are just and equitable, particularly for Black and minority communities, historically burdened by discriminatory practices.

Senate Bill 15 represents a balanced and thoughtful approach to child support enforcement. It prioritizes accountability while protecting vulnerable families, ensuring that enforcement measures are applied equitably and do not exacerbate existing inequalities. For these reasons, the Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland strongly supports Senate Bill 15 and urges you to make a favorable report.

Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland

sb15.pdf

Uploaded by: Will Vormelker

Position: INFO

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MARYLAND JUDICIAL COUNCIL LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE

MEMORANDUM

TO: Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
FROM: Legislative Committee
Suzanne D. Pelz, Esq.
410-260-1523
RE: Senate Bill 15
Child Support – Driver's License Suspension for Arrearages and
Court Orders
DATE: January 15, 2025
(1/22)

INFORMATIONAL COMMENT PAPER

The Judiciary respects the separation of powers doctrine and acknowledges that the legislature is the policy-making branch. As such, the Judiciary has no position on the policy aims of this legislation and defers to the legislative branch on such matters.

The Judiciary writes only to provide information, if useful for the Committee's consideration. A significant number of individuals at risk of losing their license for nonpayment of child support are people who need that license in order to work the job that will permit payment of that child support order. Extending the time of nonpayment for a noncommercial license to be the same as the time for nonpayment of a commercial license provides these individuals with additional time to attempt a resolution with the Child Support Administration before their license can be suspended.

Adding an income-based exception to the conditions for license suspension further limits the number of low-income individuals who might lose their livelihood and ability to pay the support order if their license is suspended.

cc. Hon. Ron Watson
Judicial Council
Legislative Committee
Kelley O'Connor