

Tuesday, February 18, 2025



Showing Up for Racial Justice

Dear Members of the House Judiciary Committee,

I am submitting this testimony as a member of Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) Baltimore, a group of individuals working to mobilize white people in a multi-racial movement for equity and racial justice in Baltimore City, Baltimore County, and Howard County. We are also working in collaboration with Out for Justice, which advocates for the reform of policies and practices that adversely affect incarcerated people's successful reintegration into society. I am a resident of Baltimore City and District 41. I am testifying in **support of Child support license suspension (exception (HB0681))**.

HB0681 bill forbids the suspension of a driver's license for failure to pay child support where the person makes less than 250% of the federal poverty guideline. 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 child support. In effect, they counter-productively create a barrier to employment, make it difficult to be an involved and active parent, and make the parent in arrears less able to make child-support payments.

Suspending fewer licenses could even save the state money. When Washington state stopped suspending licenses for failure to pay non-moving violations, there were 500 fewer arrests for driving while suspended, which saved an estimated 4,500 hours of patrol officers' time.

The current system disproportionately affects low-income parents and families. A New Jersey survey found that 42 percent of people with a history of driver's license suspension lost their jobs when they had their driving privileges suspended. Job loss was experienced across all income and age groups, however it was most prominent among low-income and younger drivers. This bill could give lower-income noncustodial parents a better chance to get to work and have the ability to pay child support.

It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to vote **in support of Child support-driver's license suspension (HB0681)**.

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,

Dr. Katherine Blaha

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