



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 15/ HOUSE BILL 681
Child Support - Driver's License Suspension for Arrearages and Court Orders

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

FROM: Jonathan Williams

My name is Jonathan Williams, and I live in Baltimore City. I support Senate Bill 15/ House Bill 681- 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 / House Bill 681 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 / House Bill 681.