



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 412

Child Support - Suspension of Driver's Licenses

TO: Chair and Members of the Chair and Members of the Judiciary and Judicial Proceedings

FROM: Jonathan Williams, an Out For Justice member

My name is Jonathan Williams, and I am a resident of Baltimore City. I am for the proposed HOUSE BILL 0412 - Driver's Licenses - Suspension for Child Support Arrearages - Exception.

I am a father of a 9-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 approve it before it took effect. I was initially given misleading or incomplete information and told I would not be able 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 received a notice in the mail shortly thereafter that I learned my license had been suspended for child support arrears totaling over \$9,000. I knew when I signed the order that my payments would be \$840 a month, including court fees. Once the court fees were paid, the payments would drop to \$640 per month.

At the time, I was bringing home around \$2,600 a month from my job as an IT Site Coordinator. **I started driving for Uber part-time to supplement my income to help pay my child support when the time came.** Both jobs required a valid driver's license. My expenses at the time included a \$ 1,200 mortgage, \$500 car payment, \$160 for car insurance, \$250 for utilities, and \$200 for gas, groceries, and miscellaneous purchases. At the end of the month, I had about \$300 left over. While driving for Uber, I was averaging about \$20 per hour, which would have given me a max \$800 per month in extra income.

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

When I contacted the Department of Human Resources, no one I spoke with would even listen to or understand my situation. I would get similar statements: **"You can get your license reinstated when you pay all of your back pay,"** "You should have saved the money during those months." It appeared I wouldn't receive any assistance until I paid what was owed. At this point, I gave up because doing the right thing felt like a punishment rather 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 circumstances that may be grounds for a modification include significant changes in income, changes in work-related day care 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 DHR.

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

The repossession added an extra \$9,000 to the \$8,000 I already owed. At this point, I'm now \$17000 in debt and have lost two jobs. I've now lost my home, car, both jobs, and I'm 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?**

I completely support the proposed HOUSE BILL 412. I hope that my testimony sheds some light and understanding on what many parents have gone through and are going through. **As they currently stand, the rules and regulations sometimes do more harm than good.** Please take into consideration that there are parents who want the best for their child(ren) and that situations like mine are sensitive and need the flexibility to be negotiated. I believe that 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 a punishment (i.e.license suspension) is imposed that is detrimental to all parties involved. Your consideration of these matters and solutions is very much appreciated.

As detailed above, this is not an account of nefarious intentions to avoid paying my child support, but of correcting a system not designed for real-life implementation or the human experience that SB0347 would help reduce.

Out for Justice [supports HB 412](#)

We respectfully urge a [favorable](#) report on [House Bill 412](#).