

JOTF JOB OPPORTUNITIES TASK FORCE

Advocating better skills, jobs, and incomes

Eliminate Driver's License Suspensions for Low-Wage Workers

THE CHALLENGE

- Mobility is key in Maryland's regional economy. More than **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.**
- 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.
- 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* be able to pay off this debt.
- Child support debt triggers a suspended driver's license, arrest, or incarceration, which further complicates the ability for low-wage workers to secure and maintain employment.
- **Although African Americans make up 31.1% of Maryland's population, MDOT data suggests that they made up to 71% of the license suspensions between 2015 - 2020.**
- There is **no** evidence that suggests that suspending an individual's driver's license improves collection of arrears for persons making less than \$39k annually or 300% the Federal Poverty Level (FPL).

CURRENT LAW

- 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.
- Maryland Code Ann., Transportation §16-303 states that driving on an invalid license (suspended, canceled, or revoked) or without auto insurance in Maryland is a crime punishable by up to (1) one year in jail, a \$1000 fine, or both.
- Federal Code 42 U.S.C.A. § 666 (a) demands that all U.S. 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 "in *appropriate cases*" (16).

THE SOLUTION: ELIMINATE DRIVER'S LICENSE SUSPENSION FOR LOWER-INCOME OBLIGORS

- ✓ Maryland should allow for the repeal of driver's license suspensions for obligors who make less than \$39k annually or 300% the Federal Poverty Level (FPL).
- ✓ Driver's license suspensions for workers who make less than \$39k 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 and, in turn, decreases compliance rates.
- ✓ Suspending licenses for lower-income obligors runs counter to the purposes of increasing child support compliance. 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.

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