

JOTF JOB OPPORTUNITIES TASK FORCE

Advocating better skills, jobs, and incomes

Support HOUSE BILL 1267: Decriminalize DWP (Driving While Poor)

Eliminate driver's license suspension for unpaid fees to restore mobility to workers

THE ISSUE

- Mobility is key in Maryland's regional economy. More than 50% of Marylander's travel outside of their county for employment¹.
- Unpaid fines and fees, including traffic tickets and court fees lead to revoked or suspended licenses, which make workers choose between breaking the law or maintaining employment.
- An estimated 75% of suspended drivers continue to drive, often to get to essential locations, like work. This creates a cycle of criminalized poverty and increased debt.
- Nearly **27,000** individual charges were filed in Maryland for driving on a driver's license suspended for traffic reasons, and **2,360** of those charges led to convictions².
- In 2018, the Maryland Consumer Rights Coalition reported that one in seven vehicles in MD has an invalid vehicle registration due to an administrative flag.

CURRENT LAW

- Driver's license suspension is a tactic for several non-traffic safety related offenses, including failure to satisfy a court judgement and failure to resolve a traffic citation.
- Drivers in violation may enter into a payment plan, but only if they have accumulated \$500 in debt. A warrant for arrest can also be issued for unresolved traffic citations.
- The MVA may charge a fee for each flag or violation on a driver's registration.

THE SOLUTION: ELIMINATE DRIVER'S LICENSE SUSPENSION FOR DEBT COLLECTION

- ✓ Eliminate driver's license suspension for an outstanding court judgment and as a punishment for unpaid fines unrelated to driver safety, such as traffic citations
- ✓ Allow any Marylander who is unable to pay a traffic citation fine in full to enter into a payment plan, regardless of the amount of the fine
- ✓ Provide for non-issuance, non-reissuance, or non-renewal of a driver's license or vehicle registration as the penalty for noncompliance, instead of suspension
- ✓ End the practice of piggyback penalties by the MVA for local violations

For more information, contact:

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¹ American Community Survey. 2010-2015 estimates for Maryland. Economic characteristics data profile.

<https://www.census.gov/acs/www/data/data-tables-and-tools/data-profiles/2015/>

²"The Criminalization of Poverty: How to Break the Cycle through Policy Reform in Maryland," The Job Opportunities Task Force, 2018.

<https://jotf.org/report/the-criminalization-of-poverty-how-to-break-the-cycle-through-policy-reform-in-maryland/>