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 employment.1
- 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 convictions.2
- 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 safeties 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

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