

## MARYLAND ALLIANCE FOR JUSTICE REFORM

Working to end unnecessary incarceration and build strong, safe communities



To: Chair Will Smith and Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee Members  
From: Jennifer Zito and Bill Carlson, MAJR executive committee

January 20, 2025

The Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform (MAJR) asks you to support of SB 0015 - Child Support - Driver's License Suspension for Arrearages and Court Orders.

We believe SB 0015 is a sensible bill that will help correct a flaw in the current policies relating to driver's license suspension due to child support arrears. Under the current system an impoverished parent who is behind in their child support payments can have their driver's license automatically suspended. Driver's license suspensions do not work as an enforcement mechanism for those who are living in poverty and simply do not have the ability to pay. They create a barrier to employment and make it difficult to be an involved and active parent. The current system often has consequences that are not in the best interest of the child. Further, the punishment can paradoxically make the parent in arrears less able to make further child-support payments. Being handicapped by not being allowed to drive reduces the ability of parent to function. Or, choosing to drive with a suspended driver's license can create a ripple of further negative outcomes such as fines, arrest, and sometimes even imprisonment. The current system disproportionately affects low-income parents and families.

The basic approach taken by SB 0015 is harm reduction from the current system. SB 0015 prevents the Maryland Department of Human Services (DHS) from suspending a license if the obligor income is less than 250% of the federal poverty guidelines unless the obligator was judicially determined to enter this status voluntarily. It also provides a mechanism for DHS to learn the obligor's income from court filings in the child support orders.

The Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform (MAJR) is a nonpartisan, all-volunteer organization of nearly 2000 Marylanders who advocate for sensible evidence-based legislative and policy changes in Maryland's correctional practices. MAJR thanks you for the opportunity to provide input on this important legislation and urges the committee to give SB 0015 a favorable report.