



To: House Committee on Judiciary
From: Matt Newell-Ching, Public Affairs Director
RE: Statement of Support for HB 2614
Date: February 21, 2019

Debt-Based Driver License Suspensions Punish People for Being Poor. It's Time to End this Unfair Practice.

Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon believes that all Oregonians have the right to be free from hunger. Yet Oregon has the highest rate of hunger in the Northwest United States. Our mission is to connect Oregonians to affordable, nutritious, and culturally-appropriate food. This includes advocating for policies that address the root causes of hunger and food insecurity.

We urge the legislature to pass HB 2614. Debt-based driver license suspensions disproportionately hurt people experiencing hunger and food insecurity. They don't make our roads safer – they unnecessarily plunge families into crisis by making it harder to get to work.

We urge the members of the committee to think about what this practice means from the perspective of families who are working hard at lower-wage jobs to keep up with the rising cost of rent and other basic needs. If an individual has difficulty paying for a \$100 traffic violation – a non-criminal offense - within 30 days, the court adds an additional \$50-\$200 fee. After 35 days, payment is delinquent and a notice of suspension is issued. Once a license is suspended, an individual must pay back the debt and an additional \$75 fee to reinstate it. If the debt can't be re-paid, they will not get their license back for 20 years.

This is so much harder for low-income families than it is for affluent ones. While traffic fines for individuals with higher incomes is a minor inconvenience that can be paid quickly, these policies can trap Oregonians with low-wage jobs in a cycle of poverty by removing their ability to get to and from their job. An individual's ability to pay isn't taken into consideration. That's not fair.

It's also not good public policy. Our laws should make it easier to retain employment. Yet debt-based license suspensions undermine the dignity of work by making it harder for individuals to get to work consistently and on time, earn income, and put food on the table. Moreover, it impacts a family's ability to get kids to school on time and take care of extended family. This hurts individuals and communities.

It's time to end the practice of debt-based license suspension. Please Support HB 2614.