

February 25, 2019

House Committee on Judiciary
Oregon State Capitol
900 NE Court Street
Salem, OR 97301

Chair Williamson, Vice Chairs Gorsek and Sprenger, Members of the Committee,

On behalf of Neighborhood Partnerships, I would like to express our strong support of HB 2614, which would eliminate the practice of suspending drivers' licenses because of inability to pay fees and fines. Neighborhood Partnerships is a statewide non-profit organization that works to create financial resilience and housing opportunity in all parts of Oregon.

Suspension of driver's licenses because of inability to pay fines traps Oregonians in a hopeless cycle. Without a driver's license, employment may be directly at risk if driving privileges are a condition of employment, and a job may be hard to maintain if it's located far from home or if the logistical challenges of children or family require driving.

Suspension of driver's licenses because of fees also further exacerbates financial challenges that Oregonians with low incomes face, as the demand to pay fines within 30 days or risk suspension may pre-empt other important financial demands, like housing, food, or medical care. It adds to the income volatility that threatens the economic vitality of our state.

Finally, suspension of driver's licenses because of inability to pay fines and fees is a penalty that falls disproportionately on communities of color and other communities with low incomes, and the resulting cycle contributes to the pronounced racial wealth inequality in Oregon. Moving away from reliance on suspension of licenses as a tool to collect fees is a step toward a more equitable system.

Thank you all for your service to Oregon. I urge your support of HB 2614.



Janet Byrd, Executive Director
Neighborhood Partnerships