

To: House Judiciary Committee  
From: Angela Donley, MSW  
re: HB 2614, repeal of drivers license

Good afternoon Chair Williamson, Vice Chair Gorsek and Sprenger and members of the committee,

My name is Angela Donley from Portland Oregon. I am writing as a private citizen to tell you about my experience of having my parent lose their license over the inability to pay fines. When I was 9 years old my stepfather passed away. Leading up to his death he spent a few weeks in a coma in the hospital. When he first arrived at the hospital my mother was rushing up to see him and got pulled over. This is where she received her first ticket. Within a few weeks, she had lost her husband, lost her livelihood —since she worked for his company —and fell into a deep depression. Sadly this depression lasted for many years and caused many struggles in my family. During this time, my mother was unable to pay them to pay a lot of our bills including these fines both not only because she had lost the business her and her husband ran but also because—as a mother of 4— she had to use the limited money we had to keep our household together. Due to my mother's inability to pay her fines she ended up racking up a large debt that she will never be able to pay off.

While these fines and suspensions are put into place, the reality is that people still often must drive to continue leading a productive life and to do the best they can. These fines didn't prevent my mom from driving. She had 4 kids who needed to get to school, after-school activities, friends houses. She had to get to work and buy groceries and pay bills. We didn't live in a town that had—nor does it yet have— public transportation. We get lots of snow each year, traveling by foot or bike is not an option. There was no other option but to drive. Unfortunately, we also lived in a town that was small enough that cops were able to recognize cars and the people driving them. My mom was consistently pulled over and given more tickets that she would not be able to pay and extending the amount of time that she couldn't get her license back. She never got tickets for driving dangerously or disobeying driving laws. The tickets were always driving without a license, the fines always high and normally we would get our car impounded.

As a child, I often rode in the car with my mother. I was often subject to dealing with the issues that come with a parent who doesn't have a license. The trauma of having your car impounded or the fear you get when a cop pulls up behind you will never go away. At 35 years old, with a clean driving record, insurance, and a license, I still get sweaty palms and a dry mouth when I see police officers driving. I sometimes can barely function if they are driving behind me or in any way make me feel like I am going to get pulled over. I am not doing anything wrong, I am completely legal driving. This is a response solely based on my trauma experience as a child with a parent who couldn't have a license— solely because she was too poor to pay her fines.

Finally, I want to express how much harder this simple issue made my childhood. I struggled to get to school, I wasn't able to participate in as many activities as I would have liked. When I turned 15, I had no one to legally teach me to drive. My mom could give me pointers and illegally help me, but what kind of way is that to start your driving career? I couldn't legally practice driving with my parent and legal guardian. When I turned 16, I couldn't get my license. My mom didn't have a legal car, she couldn't buy and carry insurance without a valid license. I had to wait over a year to get the chance to drive my aunt's car and pass my test.

All these things made life so much more difficult for me. These things all began because of one ticket at the single worst time in my mom's life and the lack of a system willing to work with her or assist her in getting this taken care of. I don't condone the fact that my mom continued to drive without a license, but I absolutely understand why she has had to. To this day, she is unable to get her license or even work out a way to pay payments to get her license back. She has an aging mother to take care of and has to decide if she drives my grandma illegally to doctors or if she spends her days finding a different way to the doctors, grocery store etc because our town still does not have adequate public transportation.

I have a masters degree, I've worked in social services and am skilled at accessing resources, I've spent the last 5 years working in government, specifically as a staffer in this legislator and still am unable to help my mother obtain her license. I can not find anyone to help us walk through an extremely confusing and complicated system to find a way to pay payments that go towards the debt but doesn't leave her with no money to pay her other bills.

I am asking you to please pass this bill and allow it a vote on the floor. People should not be punished for life over being poor and not have the ability to navigate an extremely confusing system.

Thank you for your time,

Angela Donley