



February 5, 2020

Testimony in Support of House Bill 4065
Ending Debt-Base Driver License Suspensions
Submitted by Courtney Helstein on behalf of Family Forward Oregon

Chair Sanchez and Members of the Committee -

Family Forward Oregon focuses on strengthening the economic security of mothers and caregivers and that is why we strongly support House Bill 4065. Suspending driver licenses for inability to pay traps individuals in a cycle of poverty by removing their ability to get to and from their job, pursue new work opportunities or care for their family.

Debt-based license suspensions create impossible choices for mothers and caregivers in poverty. When a person loses driving privileges, unemployment often follows. Many jobs require driving privileges, even if driving is not a part of the job. Individuals who are unable to pay are often forced to choose between losing their job—and their ability to pay back their debt—or continue driving.

It is also well documented that Oregon has a history, along with most states in the US, of criminalizing economically marginalized people, through compounding fines, fees or other penalties. When poor women, who are often mothers, are unable to pay their rent or feed their kids they may delay paying fines for minor violations and can then find themselves accruing additional debt and spiraling into a greater financial crisis.

Furthermore, debt related suspensions do not affect Oregonians equally. Because Black and Latinx people are disproportionately stopped, ticketed, charged and convicted, this cycle of debt and punishment especially burdens communities of color.

HB 4065 ends the practice of debt-based license suspension. Suspending low-income Oregonians' driver licenses for failure to pay is unfair and ineffective. It does not improve public safety. We strongly urge the legislature to support this critical bill and vote yes on House Bill 4065.