



House Committee on Judiciary

February 4, 2020

Re: HB 4065

Chair Sanchez, Vice-Chair Bynum, Vice-Chair Sprenger, and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon (APANO), I am writing to express our strong support for House Bill 4065, which would end the suspension of driver licenses based on the inability to pay fines associated with non-criminal traffic violations.

APANO works to unite Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders across Oregon for social change and racial justice. We believe that all families, regardless of their income or assets, deserve the rights, recognition, and resources they need to thrive, including the ability to drive legally. A driver license makes it possible to get to work, take a child to school, complete a degree, and care for a family member. Oregon's current practice of suspending a driver license for an inability to pay a fine disrupts these basic activities of daily life.

While debt-based driver license suspensions harm all Oregonians who cannot afford to pay, the impact falls disproportionately on black, indigenous, and other communities of color, as well as low-income Oregonians. Many of the AAPI community members we work with have challenges making ends meet. Fines and the resulting debt, as well as losing the ability to drive legally and earn a living, can seriously destabilize families. Entering this cycle of debt can impose even more strain on immigrant Oregonians who are not yet citizens.

We know that Black, indigenous, and Latinx Oregonians are particularly harmed by this system. While the inequities vary across communities, people of color may be stopped more frequently, charged more often, or face higher fines for citations. As an organization working for racial justice, APANO believes that we must not only address racial bias in traffic stops, but also limit the impacts of resulting fines and disparate treatment in the legal system.

The current system does not actually increase revenue for the state, nor does it make our roads safer. We believe that driver licenses should only be suspended in cases of public safety, not as a tool of debt collection that punishes Oregonians who have low incomes, particularly the black, indigenous, and people of color who already face barriers due to bias and disparate impacts.

We respectfully urge you to vote in favor of HB 4065 so we can ensure access to driving so that no one faces a barrier to meet their basic needs because they cannot afford to pay fines, and that we can begin to limit the consequences of racial bias in this system.

Thank you,
Jenny Lee
Advocacy Director, APANO