

Dear Chair Prozanski, Vice Chair Thatcher and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee:

I am writing in support of HB4065 to end debt-based driver license suspensions. As a pastor of a rural church in Linn County, I work with many people who struggle to make ends meet. These are decent people who cannot afford the loss of their ability to drive. The choice to either drive illegally or go without health care is a burden no one should have.

I am certain that you have seen these words in other letters:

*"Suspending driver licenses for inability to pay fines keeps people from being able to pay their debts and traps people in a cycle of poverty
In Oregon, 334,338 suspensions have been issued in the past decade— not for highway safety reasons, but because someone could not pay fines from a traffic ticket, like not using their turn signal or having a headlight out. Suspending a license deprives people of reliable, lawful transportation necessary to get to and from work, keep medical appointments, care for their family or to meet their financial obligations. A system that relies on debt-based driver license suspensions creates a vicious cycle of increasing debt, keeping people from being able to pay and wasting state resources.*

Suspending licenses when someone can't pay is ineffective.

Data from around the country shows that ending suspensions does not impact revenue. Courts have access to the same collections methods as other institutions and can collect from tax refunds through the Department of Revenue. California ended suspensions with no impact on judicial court collection. OJD's collections data show that license suspension is not effective at inducing payment.

Debt-based suspensions are not related to public safety.

Taking a driver license away for not paying a fine or fee does not make our roads safer. Oregon has a mechanism to suspend driver licenses when people have too many violations and it is applied equally to people regardless of if they have money or not. Public safety should not be tied to debt collection.

Without a license, people face impossible choices.

Access to transportation is a necessary part of being able to live your life in Oregon, especially in rural areas. Many people rely on driving to handle everyday tasks—going to school or work, transporting family members, seeing the doctor, and more. Suspending a person's driving privilege means taking away their ability to meet those obligations legally—often, without a readily available alternative."

It is hard to argue with the above facts. However, even these facts do not completely illustrate the narratives that I am familiar with:

- a law-abiding, conscientious senior citizen who had to get to the hospital faced critical delay until she could get someone who was available and had a driver's license;**
- a young adult who confessed to me that he drove for several weeks without a license so he could pay child support and have enough for food and rent.**

These are but a few of our constituents. I am so grateful that you are working on this. Thank you for seeking to address this "gap" in protecting our economically vulnerable folk.

Blessings in your great work on our behalf,

Rev. Warren Light,

Spirit of the Valley United Methodist Church in Halsey,
F Street
Halsey, Oregon