

PBOT

PORTLAND BUREAU OF TRANSPORTATION

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Chloe Eudaly Commissioner **Chris Warner** Director

February 20, 2020

Senator Floyd Prozanski
Senate Committee on Judiciary
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Chair Prozanski and Members of the Committee,

The City of Portland and the Portland Bureau of Transportation (PBOT) supports HB 4065, which would eliminate driver's license suspensions resulting from failure to pay a traffic fine.

The City of Portland's Racial Equity Strategy and PBOT's Racial Equity Plan commits to transportation investments and actions that have equitable outcomes for all people. Portland's Vision Zero Action Plan is built on an equity framework and commits to addressing the disproportionate impact of traffic collisions on communities of color and low-income communities and not perpetuating harm related to enforcement.

Research shows that driver's license suspension as punishment for failing to pay a traffic fine is ineffective to deter violations and is detrimental to low-income individuals. A report released by the Financial Justice Project's San Francisco Fine and Fees Task Force reveals that failure to pay traffic fines is rarely voluntary – but rather results from the inability to pay. The report explains how punitive measures for failure to pay a traffic fine fall disproportionately on people in poverty and people of color. Driver's license suspension is particularly ineffective at increasing the rate of payment because people often lose their job once they cannot drive to it. Furthermore, suspensions have ripple effects in the community since people who lose their driving privileges can no longer meet basic family needs such as transporting kids to school or activities, aiding sick or elderly family members, or running basic errands like grocery shopping. Finally, people who do drive on a suspended license to maintain a job or care for their family are not insured – and uninsured drivers increase economic risk for all road users.

California, Montana, Idaho, Mississippi, and other states have addressed this issue by passing laws like HB 4065 that prevent the automatic suspension of driver's licenses for people unable to pay fines or fees for minor traffic tickets.

A 2018 investigation from the publication *Street Roots* shows that driver's license suspension unduly burdens low-income communities in Oregon. The report analyzed 90,600 driver's license suspensions in 2017 due to failure to pay a traffic fine, and concluded the suspensions disproportionately impacted low-income individuals and people of color. The report also suggested that the practice does not increase payment of traffic fines.



The Portland Bureau of Transportation fully complies with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the ADA Title II, and related statutes and regulations in all programs and activities. For accommodations, complaints and information, call (503) 823-5185, City TTY (503) 823-6868, or use Oregon Relay Service: 711.

Driver's license suspension for failure to pay a traffic fine is a policy that disproportionately impacts low-income individuals and is not an effective mechanism to increase payment rates. HB 4065 would repeal this practice, supporting the City of Portland's racial equity goals and making it easier for the city to implement its Vision Zero Action Plan equitably. For these reasons PBOT supports HB 4065.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chloe Eudaly". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Commissioner Chloe Eudaly