



June 23, 2020

Testimony in Support of LC 97/HB 4210
Ending Debt-Base Driver License Suspensions
Submitted by Courtney Helstein on behalf of Family Forward Oregon

Chairs Courtney, Kotek, 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 LC 97/HB 4210. 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.

Family Forward Oregon values Black lives and is committed to dismantling Oregon's legacy of racism and ongoing injustices. Real community safety means every Oregonian lives their lives free of fear for themselves and their families. The government must end its role in practices that hurt our Black, Indigenous, and people of color communities, with an emphasis on ending state violence against Black people as it manifests through policing, incarcerations, the legal system, and the criminalization of poverty through civil fines and penalties such as debt-based drivers license suspensions.

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.



LC 97/HB 4210 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 legislation and vote yes on LC 97/HB4210.