



HB 4210 - Ending Debt-Based License Suspensions
Representative Chris Gorsek

Co-Chairs Courtney and Kotek, members of the committee, my name is Chris Gorsek and I am the State Representative for House District 49. I am here today to testify in support of House Bill 4210. This legislation provides some balance; ensuring that we're using state resources in an efficient, cost effective and thoughtful manner.

This bill is important because in Oregon, the inability to pay a traffic fine for minor offenses like a failure to signal, a broken tail light, or even a minor speeding ticket can mean a suspension of up to 20 years if you are unable to pay. This can create a cruel cycle for our constituents as losing your license erodes your ability to earn money to then pay the fines.

We've heard many personal stories from people who have gone years without being able to legally drive their kids to school or their medically vulnerable loved ones to a doctor. The process becomes even more onerous because reinstating your license results in additional penalties and fees.

Unfortunately, this experience is not uncommon; license suspensions have dramatic effects on people's lives. Impacting their ability to pay other debts, housing expenses, rent, medical bills, and to provide for their children's future. Since the C19 outbreak while most people have cut down on driving, low income workers have largely become more dependent on driving to get to and from their essential jobs.

Further, as a culture while we're considering the inequities of institutional bias we should consider how people of color and low income Oregonians are all disproportionately impacted by C19 and debt-base driver license suspensions. In February, the Oregon State Police testified at length about how there is a direct line from these suspensions to the racial disparity in their citation data for driving while suspended for Black Oregonians. Ending this practice is a first step towards stopping the harm caused by an unjust fines and fees system that is exacerbated by the pandemic.



Some courts have temporarily changed their collections practices, including not suspending licenses, in recognition of the crisis and the dire circumstances low-income Oregonians find themselves in right now. But unfortunately, the majority of courts have not changed their practice, and some are even being less flexible than before the pandemic started.

In passing this legislation we would join states as diverse as Montana, Idaho, Mississippi, and California ending this ineffective practice that devastates people's lives and costs our state both time and resources.