

To: Speaker Kotek, President Courtney, and members of the Joint on the First Special Session of 2020

From: Jeston Black, Director, Office of Government Relations

Date: June 24, 2020

Re: HB 4210

Multnomah County supports House Bill 4210, which would end the practice of suspending driver licenses due to an inability to pay fines.

The current law is not rooted in legitimate public safety concerns, nor does it make our roads any safer. Rather, it disproportionately punishes people based on their economic status and deprives them of the very transportation they need for work or family obligations. It can also give rise to a cycle of debt from which it is impossible to escape. This is simply a law that lacks common sense.

We need to do everything we can to remove barriers to economic stability for low-income individuals. With staggering unemployment rates, people are struggling and one unpaid ticket could be the start of decades of economic struggles for a family. A license suspension for nonpayment can be for up to 20 years. We must not allow our current economic and public health crisis to create lasting barriers that keep people in poverty. The inability to pay a traffic fine should not deprive a person the ability to lawfully drive to the hospital, doctor's appointments, or their job.

Thank you for the Legislature's willingness to tackle this issue head-on, as well as its other efforts to reverse the effects of the "War on Crime"; which has too often been waged against the poor and communities of color. The thousands of collateral consequences that arise from involvement in the criminal justice system are overly punitive, and I applaud your efforts to create a fairer justice system.