

To: House Judiciary Committee
From: Tracy Chavez
re: HB 2614, repeal of drivers license

Good afternoon Chair Williamson, Vice Chair Gorsek and Sprenger and members of the committee,

My name is Tracy Chavez and I am a constituent from Bend, Oregon. I am sharing this testimony with you because I have been severely affected by the law that allows my license to be suspended because I am unable to pay my fines. Having a suspended driver license has affected me and my family for the past 25 years, right up to today. It has been a source of ridicule and tremendous anxiety throughout my life. It's a very expensive and embarrassing lesson I have had to learn each and every time my children and I were left on the side of the road to walk--night or day --winter or summer-- because our car had been impounded for driving without a license.

For the past 25 years, I have to drive on a daily basis, in a town where I grew up and am known for being suspended, racking up more tickets than I am comfortable to admit. All because I was unable to pay one fine. Bend has not, nor does it still, I have proper public transportation to make being a single mom easy to provide my kids with all their needs. So, legal or not, I had to drive.

In 1994, my husband died of a brain aneurysm, I received a speeding ticket on my way to the hospital to see him. This ticket became a financial nightmare for me. I had suddenly become a single parent with 4 kids to care for. I struggled to make several of my payments on that ticket, and in the end, had to choose rent and utilities overpaying it off. Just because your license gets suspended doesn't mean the world stops happening around you. I still had responsibilities and obligations. Work, grocery shopping, laundromats, to and from school, sports, doctors and dentist appointments along with many days to day errands any family has. I saw no other way to make it through our life without driving.

Besides the general stress that not having a license has caused me throughout these 25 years, it has also caused several heartaches, starting with my oldest son turning 16 and not being able to teach him to drive or take him to get a license, and on down the line with all four of my kids. It has been a hardship and heartbreak each and every time I lost my car to the impound yard because I could not afford to get it out. This issue has directly affected my career and my ability to move up in jobs and make more than minimum wage because I have been denied several jobs because of no license, and several opportunities to move up that ladder because I had no license.

I've made several attempts at trying to navigate the system and find someone who would work with me to make a plan to pay my fines off and get my driving privileges reinstated, to no avail.

I've had family members agree to pay payments for me to make sure they are paid on time every month but I can't figure out how to set up, I have asked the DMV for a hardship license to go to and from work and to take my kids from school but was denied. I don't know what else to do! So every day I take my chances driving, now to care for my mother who has COPD and Alzheimer's. I don't want to drive illegally, I want to pay my fines, I want to get a license, I want insurance and a legal car but I still--to this day--can not get help to do this. So, legal or not...I have to drive

Thank you,

Tracy Chavez