

Chair Power, Vice-Chair Wallan, and Members of the Committee: Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. For the record, I am Carl Filler with the Justice Action Network.

The Justice Action Network is the nation's largest bipartisan criminal justice reform organization. We work to pass bipartisan reforms that make our criminal justice system smarter, fairer, more efficient, and more effective. The Justice Action Network is testifying in support of [House Bill 2523](#) with the two listed amendments. This legislation will build upon Oregon's driver's license reform from last year and ensure that Oregonians who depend upon their cars for work, childcare, and essential transportation during the pandemic will be able to continue to have safe and legal access to their vehicle.

In 2020, the Oregon legislature passed bipartisan legislation to reform driver's license suspensions. [House Bill 4210](#) eliminated driver's license suspensions for failure to pay traffic-related fines and fees. This bill garnered support from law enforcement, community members, and legislators from both sides of the aisle.

That bill, however, was only prospective: individuals who failed to pay traffic-related court fines and fees prior to October 1st, 2020 still had their licenses suspended. With the COVID-19 pandemic and the associated economic downturn beginning in March of 2020, many individuals who lost their jobs were then unable to pay court fines and fees. Providing support to them and other hard-working Oregonians who need safe and legal access to their vehicles is the intent of House Bill 2523 as amended.

This bill is not retroactive, but rather gives Oregonians who qualify the chance to apply for a license reinstatement at no cost over a 12-month period. This \$75 fee, one of the Oregon Department of Transportation's highest, is a significant barrier to families who have already been unable to pay traffic infraction fines and fees. Allowing this no-cost reinstatement will provide safe and legal access to their vehicle and increase their ability to pay the underlying fines and fees.

This bill also provides for no-cost reinstatement to those who missed a traffic court date. Importantly, the underlying failure to appear must be remedied through communication with the court and a lifting of that suspension by the judge. Failure to appear infractions are often linked with failure to pay as individuals who know they cannot afford traffic fines sometimes skip hearings, unaware of the difference in the two charges.

Finally, this bill provides the opportunity for those who have failed to maintain their SR-22 (a document required when initially caught driving without insurance) to prove that insurance has been obtained. Legal aid organizations, some of whom will testify today, find that failure to maintain SR-22 is often caught up in the same failure to pay and failure to appear infractions that lead to suspensions. If an individual has an SR-22, fails to maintain it, and then remedies their SR-22 maintenance, they would be eligible for a no-cost reinstatement.

This bill will only apply to those who have licenses suspended for failure to pay traffic fines, failure to appear to a traffic infraction hearing, or who have failed to maintain their SR-22. If individuals have any other suspension, they will have to pay a reinstatement fee. And both failures to appear and to maintain a SR-22 require the individual to be eligible for reinstatement, meaning they must provide documentation and appear before the court to have their suspension lifted. This bill will ensure that those who have had their licenses suspended for non-safety related reasons, have a path to reinstatement that will not burden them with high fees they may be unable to afford.

We urge this committee to pass House Bill 2523 with the listed amendment ensuring that Oregonians can work and take care of their families.

Thank you.