

To: Senate Judiciary Committee  
From: Alicia Temple, Oregon Law Center  
Date: May 10, 2021  
Re: HB 2523A

Chair Prozanski and members of the committee:

On behalf of the Oregon Law Center (OLC), I respectfully request your support for HB 2523A, to waive the driver license reinstatement fee for people who lost their license because they weren't able to pay a traffic ticket. HB 2523 is a small, but important, next step to follow the work we did together last year to end driver license suspensions for failure to pay.

OLC's mission is to achieve justice for low-income communities in Oregon by providing a full range of the highest quality civil legal services. The vast majority of our clients have incomes at or below the federal poverty level, and work hard to provide basic necessities for themselves and their family. The crises of the past year have exacerbated the challenges for our low-income community, and an increasing number of our clients are forced to make terrible choices between paying for rent, food, health care, or other necessities.

HB 2523A waives the DMV reinstatement fee for someone who had their license suspended due to their inability to pay their traffic fine, and suspensions related to that first suspension for inability to pay. Importantly, it does not change what that person owes the court or the steps they must take to qualify for reinstatement. What it does is take away the final barrier that the \$75 reinstatement fee creates after a person has already worked with the court to pay off their debts.

Traffic tickets are a fairly common occurrence among drivers, but the fines imposed have vastly different impacts on Oregonians. For moderate and high-income Oregonians, a ticket for a traffic violation is a minor inconvenience—they pay the fine and move on with their lives. However, for the communities who are struggling to make ends meet, a \$100 ticket can be an insurmountable obstacle.

Living in poverty is really expensive. If someone doesn't have \$200 in 35 days, suddenly they owe a lot more. Under our previous system, if they couldn't afford to pay, they'd lose the ability to drive legally. They have to pay to get on a payment plan. They have to pay the fee for the court to suspend their license. And then they have to pay the fee again to get it back. This system wasn't working. It is a waste of administrative time and resources, and it is created barriers to staying employed, taking care of one's family, and paying back one's debt.

Last year, this legislature took the step of ending debt-based driver license suspensions. Ending these failure to pay suspensions was a big and important change and makes our

violation system more fair for Oregonians moving forward. Now we must turn our attention to the people who lost their license under the old, unjust, system and how to ease the path to reinstatement. Because those suspensions went into effect for twenty years, or until someone was able to pay, there are Oregonians who had their license suspended for a very long time and are suffering consequences far disproportionate to the original traffic violation.

One of the things the legislature can do is pass HB 2523, to make it so that people don't have to pay another fee when they are trying to reinstate their license. Again, this bill doesn't change any of the steps a person has to take to get their license back, but it means that when they have worked with the court and a judge has agreed to lift the license suspensions, there isn't another \$75 fee standing between them and their driver license.

Thank you for your time and consideration. OLC urges your support for HB 2523A.