



TO: Members of Michigan House Judiciary Committee

FROM: Gilda Z. Jacobs, President & CEO, Michigan League for Public Policy

DATE: September 16, 2020

SUBJECT: Support of HB 5846-5852 regarding eliminating license suspension for violations of the law unrelated to dangerous driving

The Michigan League for Public Policy is a nonpartisan policy institute dedicated to economic opportunity for all, and advocates for state-level policy that helps people and families with low incomes achieve economic security. All of the League's work is done through a racial equity lens.

The League urges you to support House Bills 5846-5852, the package of bills that would eliminate most driver's license suspensions that are not related to public safety—that is, for violations unrelated to dangerous driving. These bills take necessary steps to target a root cause of why driving without a valid license (which includes a suspended license) is the third most-common reason for jail admission in Michigan according to the Joint Task Force on Jail and Pretrial Incarceration.

In particular, HB 5846 will directly impact Michiganders with lower incomes by eliminating driver's license suspensions that are a result of failing to appear in court or pay fines and fees, provided that the underlying charge is not related to dangerous driving. Currently, this law is affecting drivers who do not have the discretionary income to pay off an initial ticket, meaning that fines and fees accrue and a driver's license is eventually suspended if a resident is not able to pay them off entirely (and subsequently resulting in an additional \$45 court fee and \$125 fee at the Secretary of State to get their license reinstated).

Instead of using license suspension as a mechanism to criminalize poverty, this package recognizes not only that this penalty often does not stop people from driving but also that driver's licenses are necessary for so many families in Michigan to support basic needs and a stable income. The vast majority (over 80%) of Michiganders drive to work, and driver's licenses also provide the ability to get groceries, drop children at school or seek healthcare such as a drive-thru COVID-19 test.

Attached is a copy of a League fact sheet that highlights the importance of this legislation based on the ways in which HB 5846 will halt a harmful cycle that punishes residents who simply cannot afford to immediately pay off a ticket with license suspension and potential arrest. The fact sheet also explores how Black drivers are disadvantaged by the current laws and the reasons that inform why we see large disparities by race when examining jail admissions for driving without a valid license. We hope this provides helpful information on this issue, the current legislation and its racial equity implications. We are happy to answer any questions you may have.

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