

U.S. Reps. Moore, Scanlon, Fitzpatrick, Reschenthaler: Introduce Driving for Opportunity Act

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“I can tell you firsthand that a valid driver’s license can be a means — and in some cases the only means given cuts to public transit systems — to find gainful employment and thrive.

Yet, for a number of years now, we have been seeing a growing pattern by cities across the country using driver’s license suspensions as a means to punish those who fail to pay a municipal debt, not to protect public safety on our roadways. Often, these penalties have nothing to do with traffic infractions or poor driving behavior and can be imposed against those who have yet to even reach the legal driving age.

Make no mistake: Those with a flagrant disregard for public safety don’t belong behind the wheel. However, each year, millions of drivers are seeing their driver’s licenses suspended for conduct that is unrelated to driving.

Besides not being an effective debt collection tool, these “too poor to drive” suspensions can hinder an individual’s ability to keep working or get work and can lead to interactions with the criminal justice system, both of which have far reaching impacts on our communities.

In Milwaukee and around the country, these policies disproportionately impact minorities and the most financially vulnerable. As noted in a 2015 report about the

practice here in Milwaukee, “The practice of suspending eligibility for driver’s license for non-payment of fines creates another burden for those who are already disadvantaged.”

The *Driving for Opportunity Act* would encourage states to end the suspension of driver’s licenses for unpaid fees to lift the burden off of drivers and to reinstate such licenses and ensure resources are better allocated towards promoting public safety.”

Read more about the *Driving for Opportunity Act* [here](#). This is a House companion to a bipartisan measure introduced in the Senate by Senators Chris Coons (D-DE) and Roger Wicker (R-MS).

The legislation has been endorsed by, among others, the American Civil Liberties Union, Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, U.S. Chamber of Commerce, National Urban League, U.S. Conference of Mayors, Major Cities Chiefs Association, Major County Sheriffs of America, and the Drug Policy Alliance.