Shifting Suspensions in Illinois

Introduction

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Illinois is making significant progress towards ending license suspension for debt collection.

In 2020, the Illinois General Assembly passed the License to Work Act, which ended suspensions for failure to pay parking tickets, impacting 75,000 Illinois driving records.

In January of 2021, the legislature passed a landmark criminal justice reform package (HB 3653: The SAFE-T Act), which dramatically expands Illinois residents' freedom to drive. On February 22, Governor Pritzker signed the bill into law. With this legislation, Illinois will no longer suspend licenses for ANY ticket fines and fees, now including traffic and automated camera fines. The SAFE-T Act is an even bigger step forward, potentially clearing suspensions and holds from hundreds of thousands of Illinois driving records.

This is a huge victory for Illinois. **Utilizing driver's license suspensions as a debt collection tool is ineffective, counterproductive, and most harmful to people of color.** These suspensions create systemic barriers to employment and undermine economic stability in our communities. Ending them reduces the criminalization of poverty. It is also a simple, smart way to stimulate our economic recovery by giving thousands better access to jobs.

ILLINOIS HAS MADE A LOT OF PROGRESS. LEARN ABOUT WHAT'S NEXT:

WHAT'S NEXT?

If you can't

work,

you can't pay.

If you can't pay,

you can't work.

What does the 2021 SAFE-T Act change?

The newest legislation would end driver's license suspensions or holds in two new categories: failure to pay automated camera tickets, and failure to pay traffic fines. These suspensions and

holds occur because of motorists' inability to pay, trapping thousands in spirals of debt.

Here's what the SAFE-T Act does:

- **Reinstatement:** Currently, over 10,000 people have suspensions for camera ticket debt, and almost 350,000 people have "holds" for traffic ticket debt. This bill removes these suspensions and holds for all currently impacted Illinois drivers.
- **No future suspension for debt collection:** Not only are current records cleared, but local governments and courts will no longer be able to request suspensions or holds from the Secretary of State due to automated camera ticket debt or unpaid traffic tickets.

LEARN MORE ABOUT THE LEGISLATION

Illinoisans most.

What does driver's license suspension look like in Illinois?

EXPLORE THE DATA IN DEPTH

Our coalition, the Transit Table, obtained zip-code level data from the Illinois Secretary of State showing where drivers are suspended for various reasons in Winter 2020/2021.

Combining all failure to pay suspensions and holds, **the suspension rate in majority Black zip codes is more than 5 times the suspension rate in white zip codes. For majority Latinx zip codes it is more than 3 times the suspension rate in white zip codes.**

Our partners at Heartland Alliance's Social Impact Research Center have also mapped out the individuals with suspensions or holds by zip code.

Consistently, zip codes with higher

rates of residents of color have higher rates of suspensions.

It's true in East Saint Louis.

Map on the left currently displays percent Black population. Click the dropdown to explore more demographic measures.

VIEW MAP AS IMAGE

It's true in Metro Chicago.

Map on the left currently displays percent Latinx population. Click the dropdown to explore more demographic measures.

VIEW MAP AS IMAGE

It's true across the state.

Map on the left currently displays percent white population.

Explore any of these interactive maps to see who has failure to pay "holds," suspensions for failure to pay automated camera tickets, suspensions for failure to appear in traffic court, and suspensions for failure to pay child support across Illinois.

VIEW MAP AS IMAGE

License suspensions draw people into the criminal legal system.

CELL BLOCK B

A 2017 SURVEY IN ILLINOIS FOUND THAT HALF OF SUSPENDED DRIVERS DIDN'T KNOW THEY WERE SUSPENDED UNTIL PULLED OVER AND INFORMED BY LAW ENFORCEMENT.

About 75% of suspended drivers keep driving, because they either don't know or have no alternative.

Driving while suspended or revoked comes with additional consequences. According to the Secretary of State, close to **60,000 people in Illinois currently have an additional suspension on their driving record for driving on a suspended or revoked license,** regardless of the original cause for suspension.

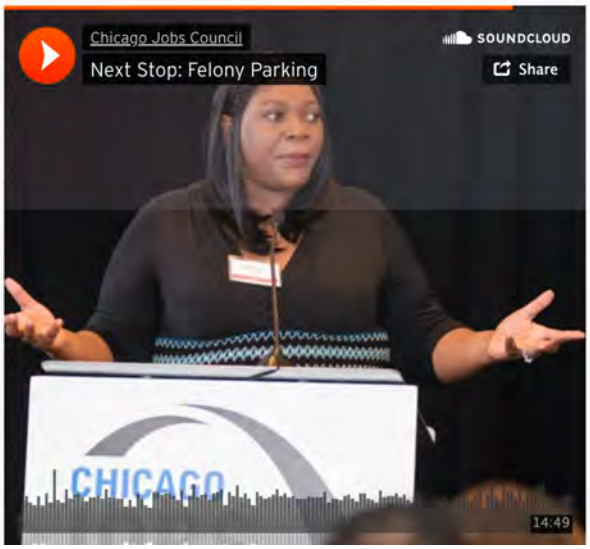
LEARN MORE:

CONSEQUENCES OF EXCESSIVE DRIVER'S LICENSE SUSPENSIONS

Not only has Illinois historically given more suspensions and holds to people of color, but Black and Latinx drivers also face steeper consequences. Drivers of color are more likely to be stopped by police and drawn into criminal legal system involvement because of a suspended license. **Only 1 of the top 10 zip codes for people with these suspensions is majority white.**

When debts and tickets pile up, communities of color pool their resources to keep licenses and reduce the consequences--and the effect is wealth stripped from the families who can least afford to lose it.

Learn how parking tickets and a suspended license she didn't know about turned into a felony for Lasheria.



This reform is even more important during the pandemic.

Eliminating hundreds of thousands of license suspensions is especially helpful during the pandemic. **It provides swift, targeted relief to the communities of color where both the health and economic impact has been worst.**

Our city, state, and national policies have allowed communities of color to die at much higher rates from COVID-19. This is related to the fact that people of color are also more likely to be working essential jobs during the pandemic.

By ending debt-based license suspension as part of the SAFE-T Act, the Illinois General Assembly also provides strategic economic relief to the communities most impacted by the current pandemic.

The Illinois General Assembly is right to let Illinois keep driving and keep working.

RELATED: "A SIMPLE BUT REVOLUTIONARY WAY TO EASE THE BURDEN OF CORONAVIRUS:

SUSPENDING DRIVER'S LICENSES OVER TRAFFIC DEBT WAS WRONG BEFORE THE PANDEMIC. IT'S EVEN WORSE NOW."

BY ANNE STUHLDREHER, DIRECTOR OF SAN FRANCISCO FINANCIAL JUSTICE PROJECT.

Keep Reading:

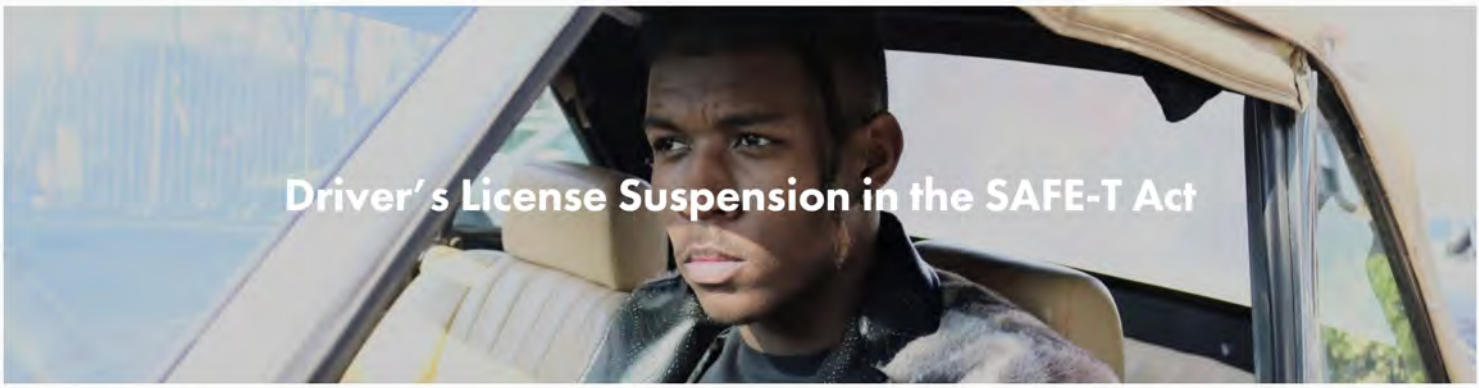
- Driver's License Suspension in the SAFE-T Act
- Next Steps in License Suspension Reform
- Consequences of Excessive Driver's License Suspensions
- Explore the License Suspension Data

About the Report:

No one does this alone! Thanks to the many contributors to this report, and others who made it possible, including:

- Community Organizing and Family Issues for their influential 2018 report "Stopping the Debt Spiral" and their powerful network of parent organizers who have been raising the alarm about debt and collections issues for years.
- Website hosted and initially designed by Heartland Alliance.
- Content updated March 2021. Lead authors were Eric Fowler and Mari Castaldi of the Chicago Jobs Council. Failure to appear suspension details written by Nusrat Choudhury & Ariana Bushweller of ACLU Illinois. Contributors also include Rev. Rachel Birkhahn-Rommelfanger of Chicago Jobs Council.
- Data requests from the Secretary of State managed by Mari Castaldi of the Chicago Jobs Council and Eric Fowler.
- Maps produced by Suniya Farooqui, Katie Buitrago, and Miranda Santillo of Heartland Alliance's Social IMPACT Research Center.
- Statistics and graphs were produced by Sam Minkowicz, Northwestern University.
- A huge thank you to the Illinois Secretary of State for their prompt and detailed responses to multiple information requests.

Shifting Suspensions in Illinois



The SAFE-T Act is a landmark criminal justice reform package signed into law in February 2021 (HB 3653). It dramatically expands Illinois residents' freedom to drive.

The General Assembly passed the License to Work Act in 2020, which ended suspensions for failure to pay parking tickets. The SAFE-T Act is an even bigger step forward, potentially clearing suspensions and holds from hundreds of thousands of Illinois records (compared to about 75,000 licenses impacted by the License to

Work).

Here is what changes with the SAFE-T Act:

Download or print this information about the SAFE-T Act.

The bill ends driver's license suspensions and holds in three new categories: failure to pay automated camera tickets, failure to pay traffic fines, and failure to pay abandoned vehicle fees. These suspensions occur because of motorists' inability to pay. This traps low-income motorists in debt spirals, while well-off drivers can pay and keep driving.

Here's what happens before the SAFE-T Act:

- Camera tickets: Once a motorist has 5 or more unpaid automated camera tickets (like red light or speed cameras), the local government that runs the cameras can request a driver's license suspension from the Secretary of State.
- Failure to pay traffic tickets: When a motorist hasn't paid a single traffic fine or penalty, the clerk of court can notify the Secretary of State to place a "hold" (or a "stop") preventing the renewal of that license. Once the license expires, the hold acts the same as a suspension, and the driver can't renew until they've paid.
- Abandoned vehicle fees: Illinoisans may be charged fees if they are found to be the owner of a vehicle abandoned on private property. Failure to pay those fees can result in a driver's license suspension.
- Length of suspension: Indefinite. The only way to escape the hold or suspension is to pay. And if someone is caught driving while suspended, which is common, they face additional consequences and barriers to getting their license back.

Here's what happens with the SAFE-T Act in effect:

- Reinstatement: Currently, over 10,000 people have suspensions for camera ticket debt, and almost 350,000 people have holds for traffic ticket debt. This bill removes these suspensions and holds for all currently impacted Illinois drivers.
- No future suspension: Courts and local governments will no longer be able to request suspensions or holds from the Secretary of State due to automated camera ticket debt or unpaid traffic tickets.
- These suspensions and holds will be cleared from all Illinois driving records by July 1, 2021.

This reform brings Illinois in line with best practices and progress in other states:

- Since 2017, over a dozen jurisdictions have passed reforms to curb debt-based driver's license suspensions. The following states completely protect drivers from suspension for failure to pay: California, Idaho, Kentucky, Mississippi

from suspension for failure to pay: California, Idaho, Kentucky, Mississippi, Montana, Oregon, Virginia, West Virginia, Wyoming. Four other states besides Illinois have proposals to join their ranks.

- Most states do not suspend driver's licenses for automated camera ticket debt. These suspensions can be a legal liability for states, because ticket issuers cannot know or prove that the driver of the car is the same person as the registered owner of the car. Ending these suspensions is also a win for due process.

Who will benefit?

Once in effect, this bill will remove suspensions and holds from an estimated 350,000 Illinois driving records. This doesn't guarantee that 350,000 drivers will immediately be free to drive, but the impact is at the very least in the tens of thousands and likely over 100,000.*

EXPLORE THE DATA IN DEPTH

Because license suspensions and holds have put the biggest squeeze on communities of color in Illinois, they will feel the biggest relief from the reform. This is particularly true for Black and Latinx Illinoisans.

In zip codes with majority Black residents, there are about 5 times more suspensions and holds per capita for failure to pay a debt, fine, or fee.

In zip codes with majority Latino residents, there are about 3 times more suspensions and holds per capita for failure to pay a debt, fine, or fee.

*Why is there a difference between the number of people who benefit and the number of people who will be able to drive now?

There are two reasons. The first is that an individual can have multiple suspensions or holds on their record. Clearing one doesn't guarantee that there's nothing else on their record. The second is that a hold is different from a suspension. A hold only prevents renewal once a license is expired, meaning some of the people impacted may have full driving privileges already, but eliminating the hold means they'll be able to easily renew their license once it expires.

Automated Camera Ticket Suspensions are Concentrated in Communities of Color

Concentrated in Communities of Color

The top ten zip codes with the most people suspended for automated camera ticket debt are all majority Black:

Individuals with suspensions for automated camera ticket debt by zip code, compared to zip code demographics					
ZIP Code	**People with suspension**	**Percent Black**	**Percent Hispanic/Latino**	**Percent white**	**Percent below poverty**
60628	404	92.6	3.5	2.1	23.5
60620	382	95.4	1.8	1.3	24.8
60619	364	95.4	1.3	1.5	25.3
60649	288	93	2.5	2.6	31.9
60827	272	89.8	5.2	3	30.4
60617	259	56.2	37.2	5.9	23.7
60644	249	88.3	6.9	3.8	33.8
60651	239	50.8	42.9	4.4	24.9
60636	230	87.8	9.4	1.5	31.9
60409	226	74.4	15.6	9.5	18

Failure to Pay Holds are Concentrated in Communities of Color

The top ten zip codes with the most people with failure to pay holds are all majority Black or Latinx:

Individuals with holds for failure to pay by zip code, compared to zip code demographics					
ZIP Code	**People with suspension**	**Percent Black**	**Percent Hispanic/Latino**	**Percent white**	**Percent below poverty**
60628	5458	92.6	3.5	2.1	23.5
60620	4928	95.4	1.8	1.3	24.8
60085	4331	17.6	61.4	13.9	19.8
60619	4145	95.4	1.3	1.5	25.3
60411	4137	50.2	27.6	18.6	23.5
60617	3969	56.2	37.2	5.9	23.7
60651	3801	50.8	42.9	4.4	24.9
60629	3751	19.2	71.6	7.7	17.7
60644	3631	88.3	6.9	3.8	33.8
60623	3614	29.7	66.8	2.9	30.3

Cutting down on license suspensions is a win for our economy, and a win for racial equity.

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Shifting Suspensions in Illinois

Illinois has made huge progress making sure everyone is Free to Drive regardless of their ability to pay.

Suspensions Eliminated:

- ☒ Parking ticket debt

  75,000 suspensions cleared

- ☒ Automated camera ticket debt

  10,152 suspensions cleared

In 2020, the Illinois General Assembly passed the License to Work Act, which ended suspension for failure to pay parking tickets, impacting 75,000 Illinois driving records. In February of 2021, the Governor signed the SAFE-T Act, a landmark criminal justice reform package that included clearance of suspensions and holds from over 350,000 Illinois driving records.

Leaders and citizens from many sides of the political spectrum have come together in agreement that we should not hold driver's licenses hostage over unpaid debts. **The next issues are clear: suspension for child support debt, and suspension for failure to appear in traffic court--an extension of failure to pay.**

☒ **Failure to pay traffic fines**

346,930 holds cleared

☐ **Failure to appear in traffic court**

104,050 drivers suspended

☐ **Failure to pay child support debt**

82,675 drivers suspended by HFS

1,683 drivers suspended by courts

Up Next: End debt-driven suspensions for "failure to appear."

There are over 100,000 people suspended in Illinois for "failure to appear" in traffic court. These suspensions are often just an extension of the debt collection process for traffic tickets. Like the other debt-driven suspensions, their real world impact is devastating to communities of color.

VIEW MAP AS IMAGE

Only half of our neighboring states (Indiana, Kentucky, and Missouri) suspend licenses for failure to appear. Iowa, Wisconsin, and Michigan have all eliminated the practice.

Our analysis shows that the top ten zip codes with the most failure-to-appear suspensions are predominately Black and/or Hispanic.

Individuals with suspensions for failure to appear by zip code, compared to zip code demographics					
ZIP Code	People with suspension	Percent Black	Percent Hispanic/Latino	Percent white	Percent below poverty
60628	2518	92.6	3.5	2.1	23.5
60620	2247	95.4	1.8	1.3	24.8
60617	1936	56.2	37.2	5.9	23.7
60619	1849	95.4	1.3	1.5	25.3
60644	1730	88.3	6.9	3.8	33.8
60651	1712	50.8	42.9	4.4	24.9
60623	1661	29.7	66.8	2.9	30.3
60636	1607	87.8	9.4	1.5	31.9
60411	1600	50.2	27.6	18.6	23.5
60426	1503	68.4	24.1	3.7	30.6

A failure-to-appear suspension occurs when an individual does not appear in court to answer for a ticket charging them with a violation of the Illinois traffic code or a local ordinance. According to Illinois law, when an individual does not appear in traffic court, the court has two options: (1) continue the case for a minimum of thirty days and give the individual another chance to appear in court or (2) enter a failure-to-appear order. The court will not enter a failure-to-appear order if the court continues the case and the individual appears in court on or before the continuance date. The court will enter a failure-to-appear order if the court does continue the case and the individual does not appear in court on or before the continuance date.

After the court enters a failure-to-appear order, the clerk of the court will send a notice to the Secretary of State ("the Secretary") indicating that a failure-to-appear order has been entered against the individual. Upon receiving this notice, the Secretary will immediately suspend the individual's driver's license for failure to appear.

According to Illinois law, to have the Secretary of State remove a failure-to-appear suspension from a driver's license, the individual must ***appear*** in court and "resolve the violation." Some court clerks have interpreted this to mean that an individual with a failure-to-pay suspension must not only appear in court, but also must ***pay*** any fines imposed for the original violation in order to request removal of the suspension. After the individual has appeared in court—or, in some courts, after the individual has appeared and paid any fines and fees imposed for the traffic violation—the clerk of court will provide the individual with a notice

violation—the clerk of court will provide the individual with a notice of compliance and send a copy of the notice to the Secretary. Upon receiving the notice of compliance, the Secretary will remove the failure-to-appear suspension from the individual's driving record.

Up Next: Curb the use of license suspension to collect child support debts.

There are almost 85,000 people suspended in Illinois for failure to pay child support. While federal law technically prohibits states from fully eliminating this suspension authority in state statute, Illinois legislators have plenty of options to curtail them. And there are plenty of reasons why they should.

CHILD SUPPORT SUSPENSIONS CAN COME FROM A COURT OR FROM THE ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF HEALTHCARE AND FAMILY SERVICES.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE REPORTED 82,675 DRIVERS ARE CURRENTLY SUSPENDED BY DHFS AND 1,683 BY COURTS.

Like the other debt-driven suspensions, they devastate people of color with no way out of the debt spiral.

VIEW MAP AS IMAGE

Individuals with child support suspensions from DHFS by zip code, compared to zip code demographics

ZIP Code	People with suspension	Percent Black	Percent Hispanic/Latino	Percent white	Percent below poverty
60628	1569	92.6	3.5	2.1	23.5
60620	1377	95.4	1.8	1.3	24.8
60619	1192	95.4	1.3	1.5	25.3
60617	1187	56.2	37.2	5.9	23.7
60651	1083	50.8	42.9	4.4	24.9
60644	986	88.3	6.9	3.8	33.8
60411	952	50.2	27.6	18.6	23.5
60636	878	87.8	9.4	1.5	31.9
60629	858	19.2	71.6	7.7	17.7
60623	848	29.7	66.8	2.9	30.3

Outstanding child support debts can be a huge burden on individuals and families--especially if a parent didn't know or wasn't able to adjust their payment while incarcerated. With

indefinite suspensions until the debts are resolved, debtors can go years or decades without a license, and no way to earn the money to pay the debt.

While suspension has a large negative impact on debtors, it has a small positive impact on collection efforts. According to the Congressional Research Service, "income withholding is the main and most effective way of collecting child support," making up 67% of collections. Driver's license suspension is one of the tools listed under "other," which brings in 16%. Most of the people suspended are simply pushed deeper into debt. The GAO reports that suspension leads to collecting child support payments in 29 percent of the cases for which it was used. The majority impacted (71 percent) should not be acceptable losses.

Alarmingly, Illinois' restricted driving permit isn't helping at all. Not a single person in Illinois had an active restricted driving permit under this program when the Secretary of State ran their report.

We recommend legislators consider the following options to relieve the burden of license suspensions for non-custodial parents with unpaid child support debts:

- **Push for federal reform to child support suspension requirements.** Federal law currently requires states to have some license suspension mechanism as a condition of receiving child support enforcement dollars. That mandate is unnecessary and should be repealed. Illinois leaders should join other states in calling on federal lawmakers to repeal this counterproductive mandate.
- **Limit the length of the suspension.** Currently, reinstatement is related to repayment. However, research shows that 42% of suspended drivers lose their job following a suspension. Many do not find another, or cannot find another with similar wages. Without being able to reobtain stable income, the suspension can become a life sentence that prevents rather than ensures payment. Legislators could consider creating a time limit for the suspension (for example limiting suspensions to 6 months). Legislation should also include retroactive reinstatement of licenses for individuals who have already served the number of months of license suspension for child support debts.
- **Limit suspension to individuals with sufficient financial resources.** Often, child support enforcement offices do not have updated records about the actual financial means of non-custodial parents. Legislation should be considered to limit suspension as a tool only to cases where the non-custodial parent is verified to be over 400% of the federal

poverty line. Georgia, for example, considers ability to pay and willfulness of nonpayment as factors before suspension (GA Code § 19-11-9.3). Illinois could enact a similar policy and establish the assumption that anyone at or under 400% of the FPL is unable to pay and should not lose their driving privileges.

- **Limit suspension in cases of public interest.** There is a public interest in transportation for children and families, as well as stable employment. Allow non-custodial parents to request maintenance of their driving privileges if they can establish one or more of the following potential harms: 1) Suspension will cause a hardship (economic or otherwise) to the individual's dependent(s) or other family members, 2) Suspension will likely lead to the loss of a job, or 3) Suspension will reduce the ability of the individual to visit one or more of their children, regardless of primary custody. Louisiana provides an example: at the request of the obligor or someone else who may experience financial hardship due to the suspension, the court may authorize a temporary license.
- **Presume the need to drive and provide restricted driving permits to all suspended non-custodial parents.** Illinois' restricted driver's license for child support obligors is extremely difficult to obtain. The program is intended to allow individuals with child support debts to drive to and from work or in search of work while suspended. But in 2019, only 120 new permits were granted, and as of January 2021, all 1,104 of the Family Responsibility Permits on record with the Secretary of State were expired. Legislators should consider eliminating this application process, and instead issue restricted driver's licenses to all non-custodial parents suspended under the Family Financial Responsibility law. California provides a temporary license for 150 days to suspended non-custodial parents (Cal. Fam. Code § 17520).
- Pursue other technical solutions, such as waivers, grants, and exemptions. Detailed research has been prepared for the Chicago Jobs Council by the Legal Skills in Social Context program at Northeastern University School of Law.

There are better ways to promote debt repayment than suspending driver's licenses.

It will be tempting to use fines and fees to reduce coming budget shortfalls. These policies continue to ruin family finances,

devastate job prospects, and increase criminal legal system contact when people drive (often unknowingly) while suspended. With this global pandemic threatening the health and financial wellbeing of the most vulnerable Illinois families more than ever, we cannot afford to continue these harmful, regressive policies.

When governments can hold peoples' lives hostage with a suspended license...

it becomes easier to treat tickets, fines, and fees as an ATM to fund state and local governments. This strategy hits communities of color the hardest.

The single most effective way to ensure compliance with debt is to reduce the debt to an amount that people can afford to pay. Jurisdictions that lower fines for people who can't afford to pay them tend to see an increase in collections and a reduction in

spending on enforcement. As such, the General Assembly should also consider reforms that decrease the debt burden on Illinois families, and protect hard-earned income and assets from predatory public debt collection. In addition to ending license suspensions for the above reasons, additional reforms could include:

- creating a four year statute of limitations on the collection of debt from local ticket fines, fees, and penalties;
- requiring municipalities and counties to adopt affordable payment plans for fines and fees at all levels, including traffic court;
- limiting late penalties, add-on fees, and interest on local tickets and compliance violations;
- restricting the seizure of state tax returns to protect people with low incomes who cannot afford to pay local ticket debt;
- disallowing booting and towing vehicles for failure to pay fines and fees;
- creating incentives for cities to end or limit the practice of police officers issuing parking and vehicle compliance tickets;
- encouraging cities and counties to allow correctable violations as an alternative to paying ticket fines and fees;
- requiring cities and counties to make ticket, fine/fee and collections data public on a monthly basis, including anonymized demographic and zip code data where possible;
- barring cities and counties from creating employment consequences due to unpaid ticket, fine, or fee debt; and
- automatically expunging criminal convictions related to driving on a suspended license when the underlying suspension is due to inability to pay.

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Suspended license, suspended life.

Hear it from them.

Ulixes:

Working in construction, Ulixes needs a license in order to work.

Listen to his story from a July 2019 press conference on fines and fees reform in Chicago.

Senator Villanueva:

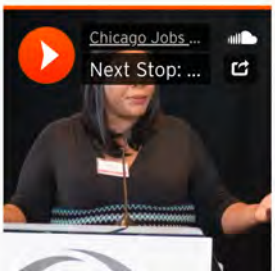
"A State Senator Had Thousands of Dollars in Ticket Debt. Now She's Fighting to Make Sure Others Won't."

In February 2020, State Senator Celina Villanueva shared with ProPublica Illinois how red light camera and other tickets almost cost her driver's license before she joined the legislature.

Rodney:

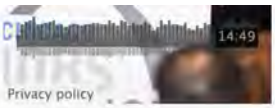
Rodney got 77 tickets in 90 days in the City of Chicago, where he works as a firefighter. He needed his license to keep his job. To escape the spiraling debt and protect his driver's license from suspension, he filed for bankruptcy and drove for Uber on the side.

Lasheria:



Learn how ticket debt and a license suspension she thought was resolved turned into a felony for Lasheria, who shared her story with the Chicago Jobs Council in 2018.

You can also find her full story in the report Living in Suspension, from the Chicago Jobs Council



Chicago Jobs Council - Meet Shop Fetch...

The research confirms what the community already knows: racist impact, lost jobs, weakened economy.

SOME JOBS REQUIRING A LICENSE:

- AUTOMOTIVE TECHNICIAN
- CABLE INSTALLATION TECHNICIAN
- CAREGIVER
- CONSTRUCTION WORKER
- HOUSECLEANER
- HVAC TECHNICIAN
- LANDSCAPING CREW MEMBER
- MAINTENANCE WORKER
- PLUMBER
- PRESSURE WASHER
- TRUCK WASHER
- UNARMED SECURITY OFFICER
- WAREHOUSE WORKER

Utilizing driver's license suspension as a debt collection tool is ineffective, counterproductive, and most harmful to people of color. Furthermore, driver's license suspensions create massive barriers to employment which threaten our state's economic recovery from the COVID-19 crisis and our ability to overcome long standing racialized gaps in employment and income.

Suspensions lead to job loss and a weakened economy.

Many professions require people to drive. Many non-driving jobs also require applicants to have a valid license. Even if jobs don't require a license, most Illinoisans need one to get to the job. 80% of Illinoisans drive to work*.

These job losses aren't theoretical. A 2007 New Jersey study found that 42% of individuals lost their jobs following a driver's license suspension. Of the roughly half who were able to find another job, 88% reported a decrease in income. In the Chicago Jobs Council's 2017 survey of over 500 Illinois residents, we found that **52% of respondents suspended for non-driving violations lost or missed out on a job opportunity because they didn't have a license.**

*U.S. CENSUS BUREAU, 2015 AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY 1-YEAR ESTIMATES

Suspensions for economic reasons also burden local employment and training services. Publicly funded employment programs help the un- and under-employed gain skills and find employment. But debt-related suspensions make employment less likely for many participants. Among the Jobs Council's survey respondents served by workforce development and adult education programs, 25% have experienced a suspended or revoked license. With one hand, our government services are trying to help get people employed, while with the other, we're using the Secretary of State's office to unnecessarily hold them back.

Suspending a license to collect a public debt creates a "Catch-22": a person can't pay if they

can't work, and can't work if they can't pay.

Fines and fees can cause devastating financial distress for already struggling Illinois families. Debts often total in the thousands of dollars due to high base fines, mounting add-on fees, harsh late penalties, and significant collections costs. A Harvard Law School report called the suspension of driver's licenses "one of the most pervasive poverty traps for poor people assessed a fine that they cannot afford to pay."

In fact, the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators recommends that states do not suspend licenses for economic reasons, and everyone from the ACLU to ALEC and American's for Prosperity agrees: don't suspend licenses to collect on debt.

Black communities experience disparate harm at every step of license suspension. The pandemic multiples these harms.

Ample evidence shows that **police issue more tickets in communities of color,** fueling negative interactions with police, and leaving residents with fewer resources, less safety, and less trust in law enforcement. **Suspended driver's licenses for unpaid tickets have hit Black Chicago particularly hard: 18 of 20 Illinois zip codes with the highest suspension rates are majority Black and most are in Chicago.**

In the Jobs Council's 2017 survey, Black respondents were half as likely to have a valid license as white respondents.

The latest data from the Illinois Secretary of State shows residents of majority Black zip codes suspended at about 5 times the rate of residents of majority white zip codes. Those who live in a majority Latinx zip code are about 3 times as likely to be suspended as those in majority white zip codes.

Furthermore, the Chicago region leads the country in Chapter 13 bankruptcy filings, due in part to City tickets piled on Black motorists.

License suspensions create cascading consequences of criminalization.

When we suspend driver's licenses for unpaid debts, we make our communities less safe. According to the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators, 75% of suspended drivers continue to drive, facing further fines, fees, and incarceration if they get pulled over. In Cook County, people arrested because they drove on a suspended license spent, on average, 14 days in jail. Every moment that we spend arresting and prosecuting the poor for unpaid debt is a wasted moment that doesn't promote public safety.

Ample evidence also makes clear that people of color are more likely to be stopped by police while driving. Suspending vast numbers of Illinois driver's licenses sets yet another trap for communities of color who are more likely to be caught driving on a suspended license, scooped into the criminal justice system, and face unnecessary

suspended license, scooped into the criminal justice system, and face unnecessary consequences for themselves, their families, and their employers.

Suspensions for debt collection enable local governments and courts that rely on regressive fines and fees to generate revenue.

Over 30 municipalities in Illinois generate more than 10% of their general fund revenue from fines, fees, and forfeitures. However, we cannot ignore it when our own state laws push our people off the financial edge, particularly in the midst of an unprecedented economic and public health crisis and an ongoing crisis of excessive policing and punishment that continue to harm Black and Latinx communities. Every day, cash-strapped public agencies take away driver's licenses, vehicles, and already scarce income from low-income Illinoisans who cannot afford to pay fines and fees. This budget pressure is even more dire in the face of pandemic driven budget holes, increasing an already grave threat to economic and racial justice in our state. Of respondents to our survey who experienced economic license suspensions, 72% report owing more than $500 and 31% over $3,000 before they can re-obtain a valid license. These amounts are particularly staggering given that most Americans would struggle to deal with a $400 emergency.

If you can't work,

you can't pay.

If you can't pay,

you can't work.

Keep Reading:

1. Introduction
2. Driver's License Suspension in the SAFE-T Act
3. Next Steps in License Suspension Reform
4. Consequences of Excessive Driver's License Suspensions
5. Explore the License Suspension Data

L2W

Shifting Suspensions in Illinois

Our coalition, the Transit Table, obtained zip-code level data from the Illinois Secretary of State showing where drivers are suspended for various reasons in winter 2020/2021.

Maps

Explore the map to see how suspensions are concentrated across zip codes of various racial

demographics and economic indicators. The suspensions break down into a few different categories:

- Failure to pay holds: When a motorist hasn't paid a single traffic fine or penalty, the clerk of court notifies the Secretary of State to place a "hold" (or a "stop") preventing the renewal of that license. Once the license expires, the hold acts the same as a suspension, and the driver can't renew until they've paid.
- Automated traffic suspensions: Once a motorist has 5 or more unpaid automated camera tickets (like red light or speed cameras), the local government that runs the cameras can request a driver's license suspension from the Secretary of State.
- Child support suspensions from DHFS: When someone is 90 days or more behind on child support, they can lose their license either by order of a judge, or through an administrative process by the Department of Healthcare and Family Services. The vast majority of child support suspensions in Illinois occur at the request of DHFS. Only these are displayed here.
- Failure to appear suspensions: This type of suspension is an extension of failure to pay a traffic ticket. Unfortunately, most clerks of court do not notify the Secretary of State to reinstate until the ticket is paid, even though the trigger for this suspension is a failure to appear.

Thank you!

The data requests were handled by the Chicago Jobs Council, with input from other Transit Table coalition members. The maps were created by the Social IMPACT Research Center at Heartland Alliance. Statistics and graphs were produced by Sam Minkowicz, Northwestern University.

To explore a specific area, type in a zip code, city, or county in the magnifying glass search bar at the top left of each map.

VIEW MAP AS IMAGE

The same pattern of concentrated suspensions in communities of color holds across most of the state.

It's true in Rockford

See the failure to pay holds by percent percentage Black and percentage Latinx.

VIEW MAP AS IMAGE

VIEW MAP AS IMAGE

It's true in Peoria

See the failure to appear suspensions by percentage Black.

VIEW MAP AS IMAGE

The maps above show the number of people with current suspensions or holds per registered driver. The suspensions and holds are current as of November 2020, when the Secretary of State queried their database. The number of drivers in the database per zip code (regardless of license expiration) were calculated by the Secretary of State in December 2020.

Racist outcomes are clear in the rest of the data.

THESE ANALYSES COMBINE SUSPENSION/HOLD RECORDS FOR ALL TYPES OF FAILURE TO PAY: FAILURE TO PAY TRAFFIC FINE HOLDS, FAILURE TO PAY AUTOMATED CAMERA TICKET SUSPENSIONS, FAILURE TO PAY CHILD SUPPORT DEBTS, AND FAILURE TO APPEAR IN TRAFFIC COURT, WHICH IS AN EXTENSION OF FAILURE TO PAY TRAFFIC TICKETS IN PRACTICE.

The maps above show the number of people with at least one suspension or hold for a given reason. However, an individual can have more than one suspension or hold on their record at a time, and those suspensions or holds can be for the same reasons, different reasons, or some of both. In addition to the counts of individual people used in the maps above, the Secretary of State also provided us with counts of individual suspension/hold records in each zip code. We can combine these records to calculate which zip codes have more suspension/hold records per registered driver. **What emerges is a portrait of barriers to legally driving--a net holding people back in particular areas of the state where most people of color live.**

When comparing suspension rates in majority white zip codes with suspension rates in majority Black and Latinx zip codes, our research team found a strong correlation between race and suspensions/holds.

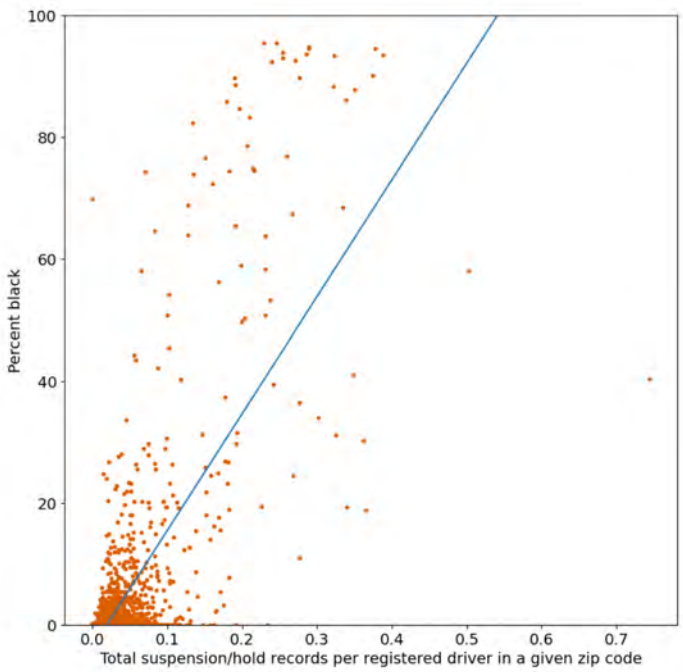
In zip codes with majority Black residents, there are about 5 times more suspensions and holds per capita for failure to pay a debt, fine, or fee.

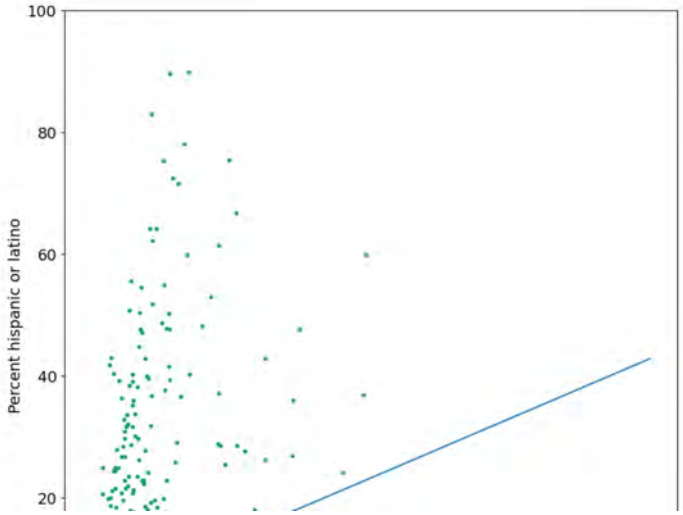
In zip codes with majority Latino residents, there are about 3 times more suspensions and holds

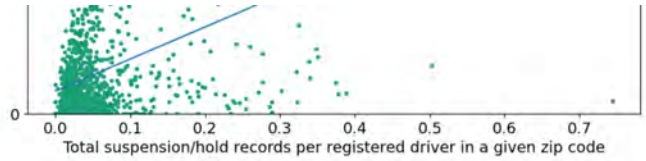
per capita for failure to pay a debt, fine, or fee.

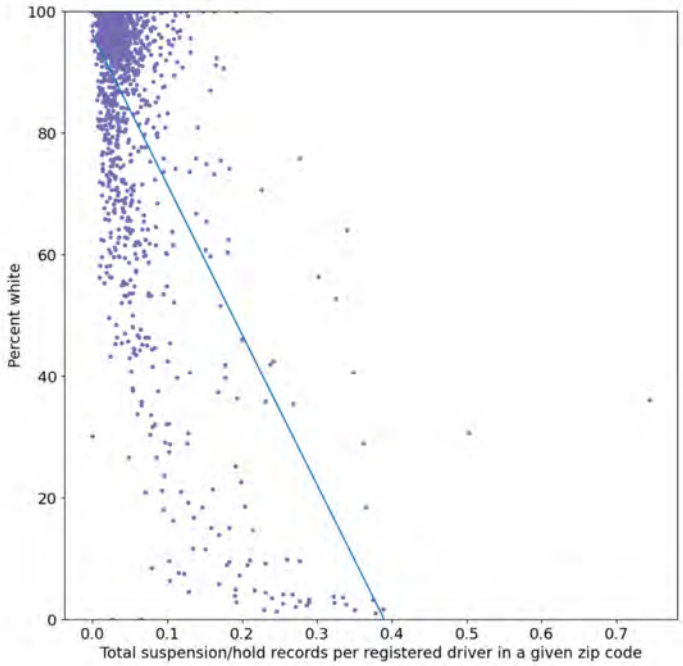
Conversely, the more white people live in your zip code, the fewer suspensions and holds there are per capita for failure to pay a debt, fine, or fee.

The correlation is also consistent across all zip codes, whether or not they are majority Black or Latinx. The trend is the same: more suspensions and holds the more people of color live in a zip code.









In several zip codes, there is more than 1 debt-based suspension or hold for every 6 drivers on record with the Secretary of State.

Almost all are majority Black or Latinx. While not every record of suspension represents an individual person, drivers with multiple suspensions on their record can face more hurdles getting their license back. In other words, more suspension records per zip code means more barriers to driving in that zip code, even if each record represents less than 1 person.

Combining all suspension/hold records, here are the 10 most suspended zip codes in Illinois:

Most suspended zip codes in Illinois: most total suspensions and holds on resident driving records			
Zip Code	**Total suspension/hold records**	**Approximate Records per Registered Driver**	**Demographics**
		1 failure to pay suspension/hold for every 3	This zip code is 31% Black and 15% Latinx in an overwhelmingly

60901	10859	registered drivers	white part of the state.
60644	10894	1 failure to pay suspension/hold for every 3 registered drivers	This zip code is 88% Black and 7% Latinx.
60628	16346	1 failure to pay suspension/hold for every 3.5 registered drivers	This zip code is 93% Black and 3.5 % Latinx.
60620	14407	1 failure to pay suspension/hold for every 4 registered drivers	This zip code is 95% Black and 2% Latinx.
60651	11276	1 failure to pay suspension/hold for every 4 registered drivers	This zip code is 51% Black and 43% Latinx.
60619	12258	1 failure to pay suspension/hold for every 4.5 registered drivers	This zip code is 95% Black and 1% Latinx.
60411	11254	1 failure to pay suspension/hold for every 5 registered drivers	This zip code is 50% Black and 28% Latinx.
60623	10168	1 failure to pay suspension/hold for every 5 registered drivers	This zip code is 30% Black and 67% Latinx.
60085	11106	1 failure to pay suspension/hold for every 6 registered drivers	This zip code is 18% Black and 61% Latinx.
		1 failure to pay suspension/hold for every 6 registered	This zip code is 56% Black and

60617	11671	drivers	37% Latinx.

THIS COMBINES SUSPENSION RECORDS FOR ALL TYPES OF FAILURE TO PAY: FAILURE TO PAY TRAFFIC FINE HOLDS, FAILURE TO PAY AUTOMATED CAMERA TICKET SUSPENSIONS, FAILURE TO PAY CHILD SUPPORT DEBTS, AND FAILURE TO APPEAR IN TRAFFIC COURT, WHICH IS AN EXTENSION OF FAILURE TO PAY TRAFFIC TICKETS IN PRACTICE. NUMBER OF DRIVERS IN A ZIP CODE INCLUDES UNEXPIRED AND EXPIRED LICENSEHOLDERS FROM THE SECRETARY OF STATE. THE TABLE IS BASED ON HIGH_LEVEL_DATA_FOR_TOP_TEN_ZIP_CODES_FOR_SUSPENSIONS_BY_RECORDS.XLSX "TOTAL RECORDS" TAB.

Other findings

The data files from the Secretary of State are extensive. Below, you can download and analyze them yourself. Here are a few other takeaways.

Child Support

While a restricted driving permit exists for individuals to keep or search for a job while suspended for child support debts, we learned that this program is not currently benefiting anyone. Their responses to our questions are underlined:

> "The Department of Healthcare and Families Services may instruct the Sec. to provide a driving permit to individuals whose licenses have been suspended because of child support issues. For example, a permit could permit the obligor to go to and from work or could permit the obligor to drive in order to seek employment.
>
> - What is the current number of these permits? (1,104 Family Responsibility Permits on database at this time, ALL Expired)
> - In 2019 how many permit requests were made by the Department? (From annual report, 120 Family Responsibility Permits loaded to database in 2019)"
>
> (See additional data received January 2021 in original data from Secretary of State, below.)

Additionally, child support suspensions issued by the courts do not appear to be concentrated in majority Black and Latino zip codes the way suspensions from DHFS are:

Individuals with child support suspensions from courts by zip code, compared to zip code demographics					
ZIP Code	**People with suspension**	**Percent Black**	**Percent Hispanic/Latino**	**Percent white**	**Percent below poverty**
62521	111	18.1	2	74.9	16.4
62526	102	16.2	3	73.2	19.9
62002	91	20.3	1.5	73.6	21.3
62040	91	7.3	7	82.8	17.4
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]

62522	58	19.5	3.1	70.6	25.5
62024	30	3.3	1	93.2	11.9
62060	25	53.3	2.1	42	27.7
62234	21	10.4	7.2	79	13.2
62095	19	4.3	0.9	91.6	20.4
62018	15	1.3	0.9	96.9	27.9

Individuals with child support suspensions from DHFS by zip code, compared to zip code demographics					
ZIP Code	**People with suspension**	**Percent Black**	**Percent Hispanic/Latino**	**Percent white**	**Percent below poverty**
60628	1569	92.6	3.5	2.1	23.5
60620	1377	95.4	1.8	1.3	24.8
60619	1192	95.4	1.3	1.5	25.3
60617	1187	56.2	37.2	5.9	23.7
60651	1083	50.8	42.9	4.4	24.9
60644	986	88.3	6.9	3.8	33.8
60411	952	50.2	27.6	18.6	23.5
60636	878	87.8	9.4	1.5	31.9
60629	858	19.2	71.6	7.7	17.7
60623	848	29.7	66.8	2.9	30.3

Driving While Suspended

In total, data from the Secretary of State show 58,738 people on record as having a suspension for driving while suspended. Their records do not indicate the underlying reason for the initial suspension.

Like the other categories we explore, these suspensions were highly concentrated in zip codes representing communities of color. Almost all of the top ten zip codes for driving while suspended suspensions are majority Black or majority Latinx:

Individuals with suspensions for driving while suspended by zip code, compared to zip code demographics					
ZIP Code	**People with suspension**	**Percent Black**	**Percent Hispanic/Latino**	**Percent white**	**Percent below poverty**
60085	1049	17.6	61.4	13.9	19.8
60505	709	7.8	75.5	15.1	17.4
60073	564	6.1	39.6	46.4	8.9
60099	561	25	28.8	37.4	17.3
60628	509	92.6	3.5	2.1	23.5

60620	470	95.4	1.8	1.3	24.8
60411	467	50.2	27.6	18.6	23.5
60435	464	15.6	28.6	51.5	13.9
60120	460	5.5	59.9	28.9	13.4
60506	431	12.7	40.3	40.6	13.5

Poverty & Unemployment

Neither poverty nor unemployment rates by zip code correlated as strongly with suspension rates as race. However, they were not irrelevant. The maps by Heartland Alliance also allow you to explore by extreme poverty. Take the example of Chicago comparing Failure to Appear suspensions with areas of extreme poverty:

VIEW MAP AS IMAGE

Data Notes

DOWNLOAD A ZIP FILE OF OUR FULL ANALYSIS

Suspension data:

Suspension data was obtained via correspondence with the Illinois Secretary of State. Among answers to a number of questions, they gave us two key suspension datasets used in this analysis: the number of people with a given suspension type in each zip code and the number of suspension records of a given type in each zip code. These datasets differ since one person can have multiple suspensions (so for a given suspension type and a given zip code the number of records is >= the number of people). They also gave us the number of registered drivers in each zip code. All of these records are current "point-in-time counts" from the date they queried their database. All queries were made between November 2020 and January 2021.

Demographics data:

Demographics data is from the ACS 2019 5-year survey.

Analyses:

We analyzed the relationship between suspensions/holds and race, poverty, and employment. For these comparisons we used the number or suspensions/holds in each zip code, the suspension rate or suspensions per capita in each zip code, and the number of suspensions per person in each zip code.

Analysis code:

The analysis code can be found at https://github.com/SamMinkowicz/cjc_shifting_suspensions_il

Original data

DOWNLOAD

FOIA DATA ZIP FOLDER 1

The datasets above have been cleaned and combined with relevant demographic data. You can download zip files of our full FOIA response from the Secretary of State here.

DOWNLOAD FOIA DATA ZIP FOLDER 2.

The first folder contains the first round of data, based on queries of the Secretary of State database in November. In answer to our followup questions after the first round, the Secretary of State queried their database again in December and January. The second round of responses is in the second folder.

Keep Reading:

1. Introduction
2. Driver's License Suspension in the SAFE-T Act
3. Next Steps in License Suspension Reform
4. Consequences of Excessive Driver's License Suspensions
5. Explore the License Suspension Data

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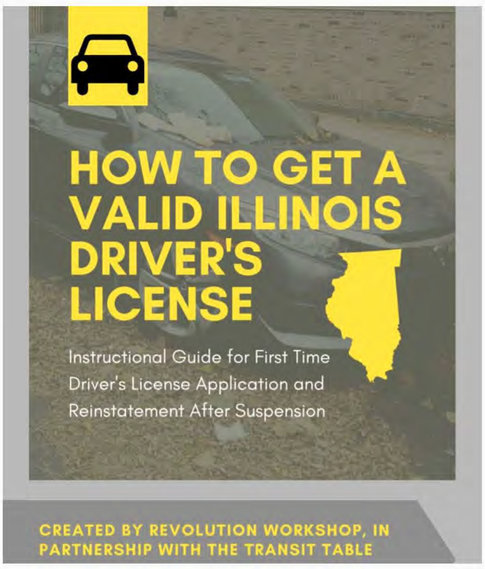
Full Guide:

How to Get a Valid Illinois Driver's License

Instructional Guide for First Time Driver's License Application and Reinstatement after Suspension



Note: Major reforms reduced the number of reasons for a license suspension or hold in Illinois in 2021. We have updated the guide to reflect these changes. Read more here.

There are many reasons someone might not have a valid driver's license. Parking ticket debts and some other suspensions are covered by the License to Work Act, but there can be a lot of other information to navigate.

Download and share this full guide on getting a valid driver's license in Illinois. Thanks to Revolution Workshop for compiling all of this information.

*In some license suspension cases, an individual may obtain a restricted driving permit to drive to work, to medical appointments or drug treatment for self or family. The individual must prove to the satisfaction of the court that no alternative means of transportation are reasonably available. No family financial responsibility driving permit may be issued for operation of a commercial motor vehicle.

To apply for a restricted driving permit, contact an informal hearing officer for a consultation at the DMV which will provide you with information about hearing requirements necessary to apply for driving privileges. A consultation is done on a walk-in basis, no appointment necessary. For information on Restricted Driving Permits and informal hearing offices see this pamphlet of instructions. You also may need this petition form.

Illinois office of the Secretary of State Driver's License Guide

Download the guide.

The Illinois office of the Secretary of State has created their own driver's license guide targeted at reentering citizens in 2021. The Secretary of State guide is a complication of resources, rather than instructions for how to obtain a valid license. The guide includes hearing officer locations lists, a list of forms need to obtain a license, copies of brochures, webpages, and forms you can find at the Secretary of State website or physical offices.

Overview: Get Your License Back

The SAFE-T Act (HB 3653) was signed into law on February 22, 2021.

THIS PAGE IS AN OVERVIEW. FOR GETTING A NEW DRIVER'S LICENSE, OR FOR DEALING WITH ISSUES NOT COVERED HERE, SEE THE DETAILED GUIDE: HOW TO GET A VALID ILLINOIS DRIVER'S LICENSE.

Under this legislation, your Illinois driver's license can no longer be suspended or "held" for unpaid red light camera tickets, unpaid speed camera tickets, unpaid traffic tickets, or unpaid abandoned vehicle fees as of July 1, 2021. If your license is currently suspended or "held" for the tickets listed, those suspensions or holds will be cleared automatically and free of charge by or on July 1, 2021.

Download or print this flyer.

Drivers with a suspension or hold for reasons other than the above reasons, such as driving under the influence or failure to pay child support, may remain in suspension.

This page will be updated as we receive new information from the Illinois Secretary of State about how they plan to implement the new law.

To find out if you can currently drive:

1. Make sure your address is up to date with the Secretary of State either online at ilsos.gov/addrchange/ or in person.
2. Look for a notice from the Secretary of State that your suspension has been rescinded AND,

Download or print

these instructions on English or in Spanish.

3. Call the Secretary of State at **217-782-6212** and press option **1** to check if your license is valid. Have your Social Security Number and Driver's License Number handy.
4. Your license might still have a suspension or a hold if there were multiple reasons for suspension/hold on your record. Call the Secretary of State at **217-782-3720** between 8 am to 4 pm Monday - Friday and press 7 to speak to an **operator**. Ask what you need to do to get your license back. **Check specifically for reinstatement fees and whether you'll need SR-22 insurance**.
5. Next steps depend on why your license was suspended. Check out our Full Guide here which may provide additional guidance. There may also be reinstatement fees, which should be paid last.

Download or print the palm cards in English or in Spanish.

Ticket Debts: Ending license suspensions and holds **does not eliminate any debt** still owed to the city, court, or other government agency that issued the tickets or fines. You may still face other consequences if you do not pay off these debts, but your driver's license will no longer be suspended due to these tickets.

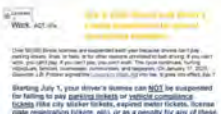
Important: It is possible to have multiple suspensions or holds on your license at the same time! If any one of those suspensions is for a reason not covered by the legislation, then you will not have your driving privileges fully restored on July 1. It is possible to have one suspension eliminated, while another still prevents you from legally driving.

Learn how to to guide job seekers through the process of getting their licenses back. View slides from the presentation.

Restricted Driving Permit: In some license suspension cases, an individual may obtain a restricted driving permit to drive to work, to medical appointments or drug treatment for self or family. The individual must prove to the satisfaction of the court that no alternative means of transportation are reasonably available. No family financial responsibility driving permit may be issued for operation of a commercial motor vehicle.

To apply for a restricted driving permit, contact an informal hearing officer for a consultation at the DMV which will provide you with information about hearing requirements necessary to apply for driving privileges. A consultation is done on a walk-in basis, no appointment necessary. For information on Restricted Driving Permits and informal hearing offices see this pamphlet of instructions. You also may need this petition form.

What else has changed recently about driver's license suspension in Illinois?



in Illinois?

The License to Work Act, was signed into law on January 17, 2020.

As of July 1, 2020, your Illinois driver's license can no longer be suspended for a lot of non-moving violations, including parking tickets and vehicle compliance tickets. License suspensions for these reasons have already been lifted by the Secretary of State.

other reasons:

- Failing to pay $ tolls or penalties for toll-way violations.
- Failing to pay any fees to the Illinois Commerce Commission.
- Minor Sent Pell.
- Being adjudicated as a "truant minor" who is "in need of supervision, published, or delinquent.
- Being a crime committed by a juvenile to further the criminal activities of an organized gang.
- Damaging, removing any part of, tampering with, going into, or working or attempting to work on a vehicle without authority to do so, if and only if actual physical control is exercised over the vehicle.
- Being convicted of criminal trespass to a vehicle (Note: license suspension is still a possibility if the individual exercises "actual physical control of the vehicle").
- Being adjudged to be afflicted with or suffering from any mental illness (validated, unused section of the code).
- Violations of section 4 of the Illinois Vehicle Control Act of 1994 (license suspension is still a possibility if the person was an occupant of a motor vehicle at the time of the violation).
- Transporting medical cannabis in a motor vehicle on a highway in anything other than a sealed, tamper-evident, medical cannabis container.

The Act also provides for the reinstatement of driving privileges for those who have already had their driver's license suspended or revoked for any of these reasons.

What is in the License to Work Act

Download PDF

Paying off Ticket Debt

If you have outstanding ticket debts, you may face additional penalties even if your license is not suspended.

Chicago Ticket Payment Plans

Here are some of your options in Chicago.

Extended:

- Pay 50% debt

OR

Hardship:

- If driver is requesting the release of vehicle booted or impounded or release of driver's licenses suspension for the first time: ***Pay down payment ($25 minimum) + certification/boot/tow/storage fees***
- If driver did not complete previous payment plan, i.e. second time requesting payment plan: ***Pay $100 + certification/boot/tow/storage fees***
- If driver has not successfully completed the two prior payment plans, i.e. third time (or more) requesting payment plan: ***Pay 25% of total debt***

For information from advocates, contact: Rachel Birkhahn-Rommelfanger at rachelbr@cjc.net.

Reports

These reports look into the realities of driver's license suspensions and the spiral of debt from tickets, fines, and fees, and the toll they have on Illinois families.

Stopping the Debt Spiral

DOWNLOAD THE REPORT

How Chicago's Vehicle Ticketing Practices Unfairly Burden Low-Income and Minority Communities

DOWNLOAD THE REPORT

Suspension Consequences of Driver's License Suspension Policies

DOWNLOAD THE REPORT

LEARN MORE

About Us.

The License to Work campaign is led by the Transit Table, a coalition convened by the Chicago Jobs Council. We are social service providers, advocates, community leaders, and other stakeholders working to eliminate transportation barriers that keep people out of work and in poverty.

There are organizations from across the state at the Transit Table. If you would like to learn more and become part of the coalition, contact us today!

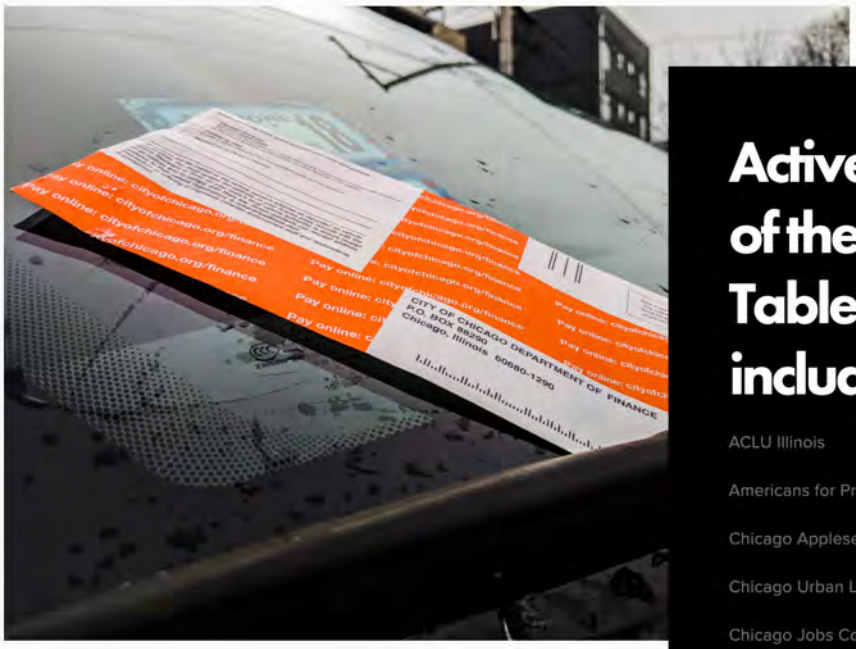
JOIN THE TRANSIT TABLE

No one does this alone! Thanks to the many contributors to this website, including:

- Community Organizing and Family Issues for their influential 2018 report "Stopping the Debt Spiral" and their powerful network of parent organizers who have been raising the alarm about debt and collections issues for years.
- Website hosted and initially designed by Heartland Alliance.
- Content updated March 2021. Lead authors were Eric Fowler and Mari Castaldi of the Chicago Jobs Council. Failure to appear suspension details written by Nusrat Choudhury & Ariana Bushweller of ACLU Illinois. Contributors also

include Rev. Rachel Birkhahn-Rommelfanger of Chicago Jobs Council.

- Data requests from the Secretary of State managed by Mari Castaldi of the Chicago Jobs Council and Eric Fowler.
- Maps produced by Suniya Farooqui, Katie Buitrago, and Miranda Santillo of Heartland Alliance's Social IMPACT Research Center.
- Statistics and graphs were produced by Sam Minkowicz, Neuroscience PhD candidate at Northwestern University.



Active members of the Transit Table coalition include:

ACLU Illinois

Americans for Prosperity--Illinois

Chicago Appleseed Fund for Justice

Chicago Urban League

Chicago Jobs Council

Economic Security Illinois

Fathers Families Healthy Communities

Heartland Alliance for Human Needs & Human Rights

Howard Area Community Center

Illinois Asset Building Group

North Lawndale Employment Network

POWER-PAC, a project of COFI

Revolution Workshop

Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law

Woodstock Institute

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License to Work Related Headlines

Latest Press Release

9/22/2021: Transit Table Response to Mayor Lori Lightfoot's 2021 Fine & Fee Reform

7/1/2021: Driver's License Reforms Take Effect in Illinois, Ending License Suspension for Inability to Pay Fines and Fees

1/13/2021: Illinois Black Caucus Criminal Justice Reform Bill Includes Driver's License Suspension Relief for Unpaid Traffic, Automated Camera Tickets

7/1/2020: Illinois Clears Parking Ticket License Suspensions From 75,000 Driving Records

10/29/2019: Victory! Illinois Legislature Vote To End Inequitable License Suspensions By Passing The "License To Work Act"

10/28/2019: Bi-Partisan Leaders & Mayor Lightfoot Urge Passage of the License to Work Act at State Capitol

Media on Driver's License Suspensions & Excessive Vehicle Ticketing

2021

3/19/2021: Chicago Reader: Bail abolition is just the tip of the iceberg. A deep dive into Illinois's sweeping new criminal justice reform law.

3/1/2021: Filter Magazine: Illinois the Latest State to End Driver's License Suspensions That Fuel Inequality

2/24/2021: Peoria Journal Star: Supporters praise new criminal justice reform law during visit to Peoria by Gov. Pritzker

2/22/2021: ABC Chicago: HB 3653: What's Included in the Bill Being Signed Into Law Monday

2/19/2021: Crain's Chicago Business: Lower fines could lead to higher revenues

2/12/2021: Chicago Tribune: Op-Ed: Don't stop with this criminal justice reform, Illinois. There's more work to do.

1/22/2021: StreetsBlog Chicago: Advocates: Ending license revocation for traffic cam tickets is the right thing to do

1/15/2021: ProPublica Illinois: Thousands of Illinois Drivers Would Get Their Licenses Back Under a Criminal Justice Reform Bill

1/14/2021: Reason: Massive Illinois Police Reform Bill Ends Cash Bail, Limits Deadly Force, Mandates Body Cameras, and Makes It Easier To Dump Crooked Cops

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10/29/2020: Chicago Tribune: Editorial: Lightfoot's call for more speed camera tickets a dead end

9/21/2020: Chicago Tribune: Despite Mayor Lori Lightfoot's announcement of ticketing relief during the pandemic, thousands received parking citations anyway: 'It's a betrayal, just absolutely ridiculous'

9/15/2020: Type Investigations: Chicago Has Been Quietly Intercepting Millions From State Tax Refunds During the Pandemic

7/6/2020: NPR Illinois: Illinois Ends License Suspension For Non-Moving Violations, More Penalties For Texting While Driving

7/1/2020: WTTW Chicago: 5 New Laws to Know in Illinois

6/26/2020: ProPublica Illinois: I've Reported on How Chicago's Ticketing System Has Hurt Black Residents. Now, the Conversation About Reform Is Changing.

6/16/2020: Chicago Tribune: Commentary: Policing for profit must end

5/11/2020: Central Illinois Proud: Pritzker signs law removing driver's license suspension for unpaid tickets

3/18/2020: ProPublica Illinois & WBEZ Chicago: Chicago Temporarily Halts Some Debt Collections and Ticketing Amid Coronavirus Pandemic

2/28/2020: ProPublica Illinois: A State Senator Had Thousands of Dollars in Ticket Debt. Now She's Fighting to Make Sure Others Won't.

1/31/2020: Block Club Chicago: Here's How To Get Your Driver's License Reinstated In Illinois (It's Happening Soon)

1/20/2020: Bellville News Democrat: Thousands of Illinois residents set to get driving privileges back

1/19/2020: KHQA: Illinois governor to reinstate suspended licenses from non-moving violations

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1/6/2020: Patch: Illinois To Stop 'Unethical' Red-Light Camera Ticket Collections

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11/21/2019: ABC 20 Springfield: New bill could reinstate 50,000 Illinois driver's licenses

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9/27/2019: ProPublica Illinois & WBEZ Chicago: Hundreds of Thousands of Chicago Motorists Could Receive Debt Relief From Vehicle Sticker Tickets as the City Expands Reform

9/20/2019: ProPublica Illinois: Here's What to Expect From Chicago City Council's Ticket Reform

9/18/2019: ProPublica Illinois & WBEZ Chicago: Chicago City Council Approves Ticket and Debt Collection Reforms to Help Low-Income and Minority Motorists

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7/28/2019: WGN: Walter Jacobson's Perspective 07/28/19: How Mayor Lori Lightfoot Is Making Good on Parking Tickets

7/26/2019: WTTW: The Week in Review: Lightfoot Notches Wins, Needles FOP (5:00 to 8:00 features ticket/press conference)

7/26/2019: ProPublica Illinois: She's Risked Arrest by Driving With a Suspended License for Seven Years. This Week She Got Some Big News.

7/26/2019: NBC Chicago: Cardi B Weighs in on Reforms to Chicago's System of Fees and Fines

7/25/2019: Illinois Policy Institute: Lightfoot proposes sweeping changes to Chicago's heavy-handed ticketing, towing scheme

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7/24/2019: StreetsBlog Chicago: Lori's Proposal to End License Suspensions for Non-Moving Violations Is a Good Idea

7/23/2019: Chicago Tribune: Mayor Lori Lightfoot introduces reforms to address Chicago's 'addiction' to fines and fees

7/23/2019: Crain's: Changes coming to the way Chicago collects parking fines and fees

7/23/2019: Sun-Times: Lightfoot outlines plan to ease punitive ticketing, towing and booting policy

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7/23/2019: ABC 7: Mayor Lori Lightfoot proposes changes to Chicago's system of fines, fees

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7/10/2019: Associated Press: Fines, jail, probation, debt: Court policies punish the poor

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7/3/2019: WTTW: City Council Caucus Chairs on Chicago's Future (Sadlowski Garza on Tickets, Fines, Fees)

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6/14/2019: ProPublica Illinois: How to Clean Up the "Hot Mess" That Is Chicago's Ticketing and Debt Collection Practices — According to a City Task Force

6/13/2019: Sun-Times: EDITORIAL: Chicago parking enforcement must be fair and equitable to all

6/11/2019: ProPublica Illinois, WBEZ: Task Force on Tickets and Debt Suggests Reforms but Needs Chicago's Mayor and City Council to Finish the Work

6/7/2019: WBEZ: Lawsuits, Stalled Legislation, And New Mayor. What's Going On With Chicago's Ticketing Reform?

5/28/2019: The Southern Illinoisan: Illinois bill to stop some driver's license suspensions put on hold (Similar stories distributed by Daily Herald and State-Journal Register)

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5/27/2019: New York Times: When a Traffic Ticket Costs $13,000

5/23/2019: 1A (WAMU NPR Washington D.C.), The Nationwide Fight Over Fines And Fees

5/17/2019: The Chicago Crusader: City Overcharging For Thousands Of Expired Meter Parking Tickets

5/16/2019: WGN Radio: Institute for Justice Attorney Diana Simpson on her car impounding case against the city

5/14/2019: CBS Chicago: Thousands Of Chicago Drivers Overbilled For Parking At Expired Meters

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3/6/19: Citizen Weekly: Supreme Court Ruling Could Be A Turning Point For Fines and Fees In Chicago

3/4/19: ProPublica Illinois, "The Ticket Trap: Front to Back "

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1/22/19: Sun-Times, "Preckwinkle vows to revamp overly punitive ticketing policy targeting minorities"

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12/6/18: ProPublica Illinois, WBEZ, "Chicago Task Force Will Take on Ticket and Debt Collection Reform"

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12/4/18: The 21st Show, Illinois Public Media, "23,000 Duplicate Vehicle Tickets Dismissed"

12/3/18: CBS Chicago, "City's Promise To Throw Out Thousands Of City Sticker Violations Still Unfulfilled"

11/29/18: ProPublica Illinois, WBEZ, "Chicago Throws Out 23,000 Duplicate Tickets Issued Since 1992 to Motorists Who Didn't Have Vehicle Stickers"

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10/29/18: Sun-Times, "Getting the boot: West Loop leads city in cars clamped, but South Side also high"

10/25/18: CBS Chicago, "Disabled Woman's $15,000 Van Wrongly Declared Abandoned, Sold For Scrap; 'It's Just Very Infuriating'"

10/23/18: Sun-Times, "Vehicle sticker changes: grace period, scofflaw amnesty — and maybe, lower fines"

10/23/18: ProPublica Illinois, "Chicago City Clerk Calls for Reforms of Vehicle Sticker Program"

10/22/18: Sun-Times, "Parking ticket writing stabilizes; vehicles getting booted drops by 10.5 percent"

10/9/18: CBS Chicago, "Where Do Drivers Get Most Red Light Tickets In Chicago?"

10/1/18: CBS Chicago, "South Shore Man Goes On A Mission To Reduce Parking Ticket Fines For Neighbors"

10/1/18: CBS Chicago, "2 Investigators: South Side Neighborhood Gets Lots More Parking Tickets Than North Side"

10/1/18: CBS Chicago, "Police Officer Caught Driving The Wrong Way To Give Out Parking Tickets; 'It's Dangerous, And For What?'"

8/27/18: WGN, "Man says car was towed after 'No Parking' sign was put up after he parked"

8/24/18: Chicago Tribune, "On city sticker fees and fines, mayoral candidates blast Emanuel's policies"

8/24/18: Chicago Tribune, "Mayoral candidate forum: How to address the disparate racial and economic impact of Chicago's parking ticket system on the African-American community?"

8/23/18: ProPublica Illinois, "Download Chicago's Parking Ticket Data Yourself"

8/17/18: Chicago Tribune, "Sticker shock -- Mayor Rahm Emanuel should be ashamed of the unconscionably high price of failing to renew a City of Chicago vehicle sticker"

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8/2/18: Chicago Reporter, "Chicago's predatory tickets and fines exploit low-income drivers for revenue"

7/27/18: ProPublica Illinois, "The "Terrible" Consequences of Chicago's Ticketing Policies"

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7/17/18: Sun-Times, "City exceeding $250 maximum penalty against thousands of motorists, lawsuit says"

7/17/18: WBEZ, "Suit: Chicago Should Refund Drivers Hit With Expensive Tickets"

7/17/18: Chicago Reader, "Cops slammed for ticketing black cyclists: 'It's about the police harassing people'"

7/13/18: WGHC Mama Dee Speaks, Interview with Woodstock

7/12/18: The Root, "If You Live in One of Chicago's Black Neighborhoods, Stop Reading This and Go Check on Your Car"

7/9/18: WTTW, "WBEZ, ProPublica Investigation Reveals Thousands of Duplicate Tickets"

7/3/18: ACLU Illinois, "New Report Shows that Excessive Tickets Target Poor People and Minorities, not 'Scofflaws'"

7/3/18: WVON Cliff Kelly Show, Woodstock Institute was interviewed about The Debt Spiral report

6/28/18: WBEZ Morning Shift, "Duplicate Ticketing Sends Drivers Into Bankruptcy, Costs City Money," coverage of "Three City Sticker Tickets on the Same Car in 90 Minutes?"

6/27/18: Ford Collaborative, including Woodstock Institute, Enforcing Inequality report

6/27/18: ProPublica Illinois & WBEZ, "Three City Sticker Tickets on the Same Car in 90 Minutes?"

6/23/18: Sun-Times, "EDITORIAL: Let's dig deeper before going easier on ticket scofflaws"

6/22/18: Sun-Times, "City urged to go easy on scofflaws after study shows minorities bear the brunt"

6/22/18: Univision, "Según un estudio, zonas conformadas en su mayoría por minorías son más propensas a infracciones de tráfico"

6/21/18: Woodstock Institute, report: "The Debt Spiral"

5/4/18: WGHC Mama Dee Speaks, Interview with CJC, Woodstock, and COFI

5/15/18: Chicago Appleseed, infographic: "Driven into Debt"

4/25/18: Reason Magazine, "Chicago Is Trying to Pay Down Its Debt by Impounding Innocent People's Cars"

4/16/18: WBEZ, "The Dubious Finances Of Chicago's Winter Parking Ban"

3/26/18: Journal Star, "Peoria seeks state help to tap $800,000 in unpaid parking tickets"

3/16/18: Illinois Public Media, "How Parking Ticket Debt Punishes Black Drivers In Chicago"

3/15/18: ProPublica Illinois "Some States No Longer Suspend Driver's Licenses for Unpaid Fines. Will Illinois Join Them?"

3/15/18: Chicago Jobs Council, report: "Living in Suspension"

3/15/18: ACLU Illinois, "Undue Driver's License Suspensions are Ruining Lives"

3/6/18: NPR Marketplace, "Parking tickets are bankrupting Chicago residents"

3/2/18: ProPublica Illinois, "She Owed $102,158.40 in Unpaid Tickets, but She's Not in the Story"

2/27/18: ProPublica Illinois , "The Many Roads to Bankruptcy"

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2/27/18: ProPublica Illinois & Mother Jones, "How Chicago Ticket Debt Sends Black Motorists Into Bankruptcy", Mother Jones article, here.

2/12/18: WBEZ, "When It Snows, Chicago Police Ticket Minority Communities More"

2/12/18: Chicago Tribune, "Black neighborhoods still see most bike tickets, police data show"

2/5/18: ABC 7, "Residents say city demanded payment for old, bogus parking tickets"

1/31/18: Chicago Reader, "New report spotlights debt afflicting women in low-income black and Latino communities", coverage of COFI's report

1/1/18: COFI, "Stopping the Debt Spiral"

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10/23/17: Chicago Tribune, "Emanuel wants more weekend parking tickets"

10/23/17: NBC Chicago, "Chicago Uses Predictive Analytics to Cash in On Parking Tickets"

10/19/17: Chicago Sun-Times, "City to expand crackdown on illegal parking, boost debt collection"

10/26/17: WGN, "City to write more parking tickets on weekends because it needs the money"

10/2/17: Illinois Policy Institute, "Chicago's Ticketing Policies Cause Spike in Bankruptcies"

9/28/17: Propublica, "Chicago's Bankruptcy Boom"

3/31/17: Chicago Reader, "Black bike advocates say they'll fight CPD's biased ticketing practices"

1/23/17: Chicago Tribune, "You Can Leave Chicago, but Parking Tickets are Forever"

Earlier

1/7/2016: DNA Info, "Thousands of Car Owners Hit With Tickets Thanks to State Budget Woes"

4/9/2015: NPR, "Study Finds The Poor Subject To Unfair Fines, Driver's License Suspensions"

10/21/14: Chicago Tribune, "City clerk targets vehicle sticker scofflaws"

If you know of related coverage that's missing from this list, please share it with us by emailing Eric.

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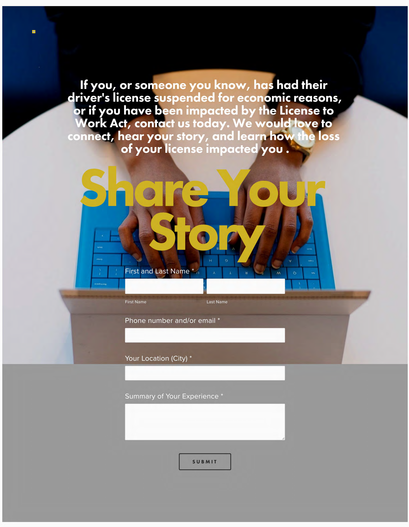

If you, or someone you know, has had their driver's license suspended for economic reasons, or if you have been impacted by the License to Work Act, contact us today. We would love to connect, hear your story, and learn how the loss of your license impacted you .

Share Your Story

First and Last Name *

First Name Last Name

Phone number and/or email *

Your Location (City) *

Summary of Your Experience *

SUBMIT

Join the Campaign

Sign on to join the Transit Table. We're working to eliminate transportation barriers like fines, fees, and license suspensions, that keep people out of work and in poverty.

By joining the coalition, you'll be added to the list of supporters on our materials and will receive periodic updates and action alerts about the campaign.

Email Address *

Organization Name *

*Please list your organization's name EXACTLY as you would like it to appear on fact sheets and other campaign materials.

Are you authorized to sign onto this campaign on behalf of your organization? *

Please make sure you have authority to sign onto the campaign on behalf of your organization (we will be listing only organizations, not individuals). If you do NOT have authorization to sign on your organization, please send the information of the person(s) in your organization who can sign on - we'd love to have your organization on board!

Yes

Name

First Name Last Name

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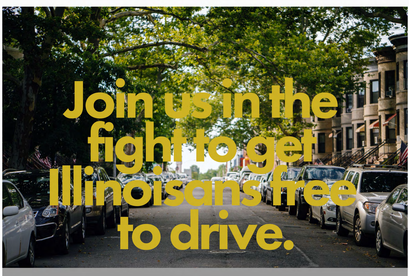

Join us in the fight to get Illinoisans free to drive.

Share on social.

Access and share the License2Work social media toolkit to help spread the word!

#StopSuspendingLives

#NoLicenseSuspensionForDebtCollection

#FreeToDrive

#DrivenIntoDebt

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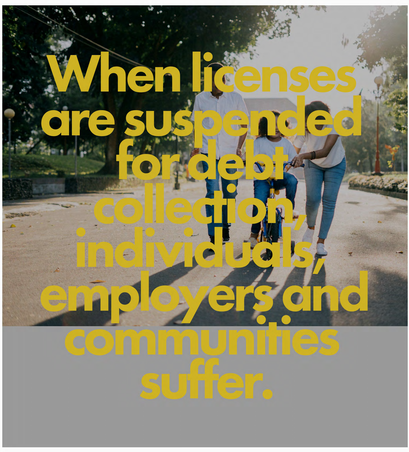

When licenses are suspended for debt collection, individuals, employers and communities suffer.