

## INTRODUCING:

# THE DRIVING FOR OPPORTUNITY ACT

## BACKGROUND:

Debt-related driver's license suspensions cost people their livelihoods, cut economic growth and undermine public safety. Right now, millions of Americans are struggling to survive with debt-related license suspensions.

## KEY FACTS:

### **86% of Americans drive to work; many jobs require a driver's license.**

Without a license, you cannot work, buy basic necessities, or get the healthcare you need. Many people have no choice but to continue driving – meaning they risk more fines and fees, a criminal conviction and incarceration.

### **Debt-based license suspensions prevent people from contributing to the economy.**

If you can't work, you can't earn. If you can't earn, you can't pay off your initial fines and fees and will continue accumulating court debt for years.

### **Debt-based license suspensions undermine public safety.**

Law enforcement has less time to focus on serious crimes when they are forced to cite, stop, fine and arrest people for driving with debt-based license suspensions.

### **10 states have ended the practice of debt-based license suspensions.**

California, Hawaii, Idaho, Maine, Maryland, Mississippi, Montana, Oregon, Virginia and West Virginia.

**40 states and D.C. still suspend, revoke or refuse to renew driver's licenses for unpaid traffic, toll, misdemeanor and/or felony fines and fees.**

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## BILL OVERVIEW:

The Driving for Opportunity Act, introduced by Senators Chris Coons (D-DE.) and Roger Wicker (R-MS.), is federal legislation that provides grants to states that do not suspend, revoke, or refuse to renew a driver's license or registration of a motor vehicle for failure to pay a civil or criminal fine or fee. It has bipartisan support from elected officials and over 50 diverse organizations.

## HIGHLIGHTS:

- The Driving for Opportunity Act authorizes the Attorney General to make grants to states to cover the costs of reinstating driver's licenses previously suspended for unpaid fines and fees.
- Reinstatement fees are a significant cost in many states, as high as \$275 in at least one state. Some states charge a fee for every debt related suspension, which can stack reinstatement fees in the hundreds of dollars.
- The act repeals the law that reduces federal highway funding for states that do not suspend driver's licenses for anyone convicted of a drug offense.

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## SUPPORTERS:

- U.S. Senators John Boozman (R-AR.), Kamala Harris (D-CA.), Chuck Grassley (R-IA), Chris Van Hollen (D-MD.), Sherrod Brown (D-OH) and Joni Ernst (R-IA).
- [24 State Attorneys General](#) including California, Colorado, Maine, Maryland, Kansas, New York and North Carolina, signed on to support this innovative approach to ending debt-based license suspensions.
- The U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the National District Attorneys Association, the Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association, the National Urban League, Instacart, [and more](#).
- 50+ member organizations of the national Free to Drive campaign signed [a letter supporting the Act](#).
- Groups from across the political spectrum have expressed support for the Driving for Opportunity Act, including Americans for Tax Reform, Americans for Prosperity, the American Civil Liberties Union, and the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law.