



For Immediate Release

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License to Work Act Passes Illinois Senate

Strong bipartisan vote on SB 1786 – 38 to 10 – in Illinois Senate to curb excessive suspension of driver’s licenses for non-driving violations

(Springfield) With strong support from across the political aisle, the Illinois Senate has approved a measure aimed at helping tens of thousands of Illinoisans who have their driver’s licenses suspended every year for reasons unrelated to bad driving. Suspensions driven by an inability to pay tickets and fines do not improve highway safety, but trap individuals in cycles of debt and unemployment. Furthermore, the underlying tickets are issued most in communities of color, and licenses are suspended at the highest rates in low-income neighborhoods and communities of color.

The License to Work Act (SB 1786) is backed by the Transit Table [coalition](#), a statewide group of human service groups, legal advocates, workforce development organizations, and other community leaders convened by the Chicago Jobs Council. Together, the coalition has worked for three years to educate legislators across the state about the dramatic impact a suspended license has on individuals, families, and businesses.

The legislation, sponsored by State Senator Omar Aquino (Chicago) and State Representative Carol Ammons (Champaign Urbana), would eliminate driver’s license suspension as a penalty for most non-driving violations, such as parking and compliance tickets, unpaid tolls, truancy (for minors), and motor fuel theft. Every offense in the bill already carries serious consequences besides license suspension.

Devastating vehicle ticket debt and the resulting driver's license suspensions have become an [issue](#) in Chicago's mayoral race, with both candidates are critical of current practices. Earlier this week, the coalition [called on further commitments](#) from Lori Lightfoot and Toni Preckwinkle to actively support reform efforts in Springfield, crack down on city departments for seeking license suspensions as a debt collection tool, and open data to the public about tickets, fines, fees, collections efforts, and the finances involved.

Today represents a reasonable step towards reforming an unnecessarily bureaucratic and punitive system that harms all of us. Not only do 75% of suspended drivers continue driving (generally because they don't realize it or have no alternative transportation), but the rest of us pay the tab when law enforcement is forced to process and incarcerate perfectly safe drivers who have had their license taken away for unrelated reasons.

For more about the harm done by excessive driver's license suspension, see the Jobs Council's report [Living in Suspension: Consequences of Driver's License Suspension Policies](#).

For more about this effort, see [License2Work.org](#).

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*The **ACLU of Illinois** has been the principal protector of constitutional rights in the state since its founding in 1929. Visit [aclu-il.org](#) for more.*

*The **Chicago Jobs Council** moves people out of poverty through employment using on-the-ground expertise, advocacy, and capacity-building. Our vision is that all people – regardless of where they start or where they've been – can access employment as a pathway out of poverty. Visit [cjc.net](#) to learn more.*

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