

Testimony in Support of *H 7125*  
An Act Relating to Motor and Other Vehicles -- Suspension or Revocation  
of Licenses -- Violations  
House Committee on Finance  
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**The Economic Progress Institute strongly supports Representative Knight's HB 7125, which removes the required \$150 reinstatement fee after a license revocation or suspension, as well as the \$350 fee for certain driving under the influence traffic violations. For many low-income people in RI, these fees are impossible to afford when they are already struggling to meet their basic needs. Without a valid license, many people can't get to work, take their children to school, or take elderly parents to the doctor. Consequently, in most places 75% of people continue driving after their license is suspended.<sup>1</sup> If they get pulled over, they can be arrested and jailed. Even a few days in jail can put someone's employment and/or housing in jeopardy. These enforcement practices make it even more difficult for people to earn the money they need to pay the reinstatement fees and get their licenses back.**

In RI, non-custodial parents can also have their licenses suspended for failure to pay child support. While this may seem like a reasonable punishment, the practice is responsible for diverting more money from child support. Each time a non-custodial parent has their license suspended for failure to pay child support, they must A) drive on a suspended license to get to work and risk incarceration and the associated costs thereof, B) miss out on opportunities to earn money because they are without transportation to get to work or interviews, or C) find some way to pay the \$150 license reinstatement fee – which is \$150 that parent could have otherwise used to pay the delinquent child support. Collecting reinstatement fees in these situations is diverting money away from children.

Research has repeatedly shown that Black and Latino people are more likely to get pulled over by police in traffic stops than their white counterparts. Accordingly, this makes Black and Latino people driving on a suspended license more likely to be further penalized for driving on a suspended license.<sup>2</sup> If HB 7125 becomes law, there would be fewer economic barriers to license reinstatement, and it would reduce the amount of Rhode Islanders of color who are disproportionately incarcerated for such minor offenses as driving on a suspended license. HB 7125 would make RI more equitable. We urge passage.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.aamva.org/getmedia/b92cc79d-560f-4def-879c-6d6e430e4f4d/Reducing-Suspended-Drivers-and-Alternative-Reinstatement-Best-Practices-Edition-3.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.chop.edu/news/study-finds-more-90-driver-s-license-suspensions-are-not-related-traffic-safety>