

# The Epidemic of Driver's License Suspensions in North Carolina

Consequences of License Suspension and Barriers to Restoration



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While many people contributed to this report, the Poverty Research Project is solely responsible for any errors.

## Introduction

Every day in North Carolina, people can't go to work, shop for groceries, pick up their kids or do other ordinary activities because of a driver's license suspension. These suspensions are **not** punishments for unsafe driving. They are administrative penalties that are triggered when a driver fails to pay a court debt or fails to appear in court in a motor vehicle case. Extenuating circumstances, like whether the court debt is affordable, are not considered. Once in place, the suspension remains active until the driver completes every step in a lengthy reinstatement process. Many suspensions last years—some last decades—turning a slap on the wrist into a permanent and debilitating condition.

The first report in this series explains how **Failure to Pay (FTP)** and **Failure to Appear (FTA)** are all too often the result of economic hardship, rather than willful noncompliance. It also details the immense scale of the problem: nearly one million North Carolinians with a suspended license with millions of active suspensions statewide.<sup>1</sup>

This second report examines the devastating collateral consequences of license suspension. Suspensions sabotage low-income North Carolinians' efforts to build a better life by trapping them in a web of penalties and court involvement that typically extend for years. A person we interviewed drew a vivid comparison. Suspension, she suggested, is

like cutting off someone's legs and arms and then setting them out of the courthouse and saying, "Go be productive. Go get a job so you can pay these fines and fees. Go take your kids to daycare." And they can't even walk. You're crippling people and then asking them to stand on their feet.<sup>2</sup>

Beyond individual consequences, the economically and racially disproportionate impact of license suspension in North Carolina implicates basic issues of fairness. It additionally hampers business, depresses employment, drags down the state economy, and drains valuable public resources from state agencies and law enforcement.

North Carolina has an opportunity to join the growing number of states that have eliminated or curbed these types of suspension. A bill abolishing these suspensions, HB 980 (the *Remove Barriers to Employment from Court Debt* act), has been introduced in the statehouse. But, as this report outlines, the state can also take many smaller steps to reduce suspension's harms.

## Individual Harms of Suspension

Driving is woven into our daily lives. A license, noted one attorney we interviewed, is **“such a critical piece of being a functioning, fully capable adult in our society.”** A person with a suspended license has three unappealing and costly options to choose from: drive anyway and risk additional charges, stay home, or rely on someone else for transportation. In reality, one or all of these options may not be possible; all come with serious disadvantages. License suspension strips people of mobility, autonomy and independence.

Most people confronted with the threat of suspension do everything they can to avoid it. We interviewed an attorney who recalled a young woman in court, pleading with the judge to give her a little time so she could use her tuition money to pay her court debt. Reflecting on this exchange, the attorney observed that it **“shows you how the system is working in a harmful way. It’s crazy to think that she was going to drop out of school. . . . If she had been able to stay in school, she probably would have a better job that would allow her to pay for a ticket up front.”**

Another interviewee noted how suspensions diminish lives and aspirations. Drivers with suspended licenses **“will literally limit their life to only what they need to do,”** she observed, **“just to avoid getting in trouble with the system again.”**

## Unemployment and Income Loss

A person who loses their license will often lose their job too.<sup>3</sup> In most of North Carolina, driving is the only practical way to get to work. About 95% of people who work outside the home drive to work alone or in a carpool.<sup>4</sup> More than one-third of workers commute more than 30 minutes to their jobsites.<sup>5</sup>

The need for a car is especially acute in rural areas. As one interviewee explained, **“At least in Raleigh, maybe there’s a bus between the two places you go . . . but some of these rural counties, there’s zero opportunity to get from one place to the other, unless you’re driving or somebody’s driving you.”** Even where public transit exists, it may not be an efficient substitute if routes don’t go where work is or they take too long to get there.

## Epidemic of Driver's License Suspension in North Carolina

For people who manage to keep their job, a suspension limits hours they can work or tasks they can do. It's harder to consistently arrive on time or pick up extra shifts. Suspensions also block career advancement. We interviewed an attorney with a client whose suspension threatened his dream job as a chef. As the attorney explained,

You have to have your license, because the chef is the one that goes and picks up the food deliveries from different stores. So they've given him a provisional period to get his license restored and are making the logistics work of somebody else doing the food pickup, but . . . if he can't get this figured out, he's going to lose this great job.

Another woman told us that she was about to earn her commercial driver's license (CDL) when she received notice of a pending suspension. This was the first she had heard of it and, in her words, she "panicked." She couldn't believe that her license was about to be suspended without a chance to explain herself in court. **"The DMV has all this information they collect on people,"** she reasoned. **"I should have had the opportunity to go to court, speak for myself, fight for myself. I should have had the opportunity to appeal it. All this could've been prevented."**

She had worked hard to obtain her CDL—it represented a new life for her and her family—and a suspension would derail her efforts. Thankfully, a local nonprofit stepped in with a loan to help her pay her court debt, stopping the suspension just in time.

For people who are unemployed, a suspended license is an obstacle to finding work. Suspensions limit the number of jobs people can reach and the types of jobs they are eligible for. The Bureau of Labor Statistics has estimated that 30% of jobs require the ability to drive.<sup>6</sup> Jobs in home healthcare, construction, trades, transportation, and public works are plentiful in North Carolina, but off-limits to anyone with a suspended license.

Many job applications require a license, even when driving is not necessary for the position. With fewer employment options, people are often forced to take whatever work they can get, rather than jobs that match their skills or experience, resulting in lower wages and stalled careers.<sup>7</sup>

## Epidemic of Driver's License Suspension in North Carolina

The income loss associated with suspension causes significant daily hardship.<sup>8</sup> One survey of North Carolina drivers found that more than a quarter of those with a suspended license were evicted due to the suspension.<sup>9</sup> A paralegal who helped people regain their licenses described the illogic of making life harder for people who are already struggling.

Imagine people that have families and a one income household—they really have to figure out what is important. Groceries, bills or get your license reinstated? I would say that probably the biggest challenge [of the job] is seeing people working against a system that is working against you.

She pointed out that a suspension itself imposes new costs beyond the court debt. **“If you can't afford the fines and fees,”** she said, **“you've got to come up with more money, but you're spending that money on Ubers or giving gas money to people who are taking you to wherever you need to go or having to take the bus.”**

Low-income households, already scrambling to cover household necessities, are forced to make constant trade-offs as suspension-related costs pile up, pushing them closer to the financial edge. A judge in a Tennessee case laid out the economic perversity of license suspension. “Losing one’s driver’s license” he wrote, “simultaneously makes the burdens of life more expensive and renders the prospect of amassing the resources needed to overcome those burdens more remote.”<sup>10</sup>

Suspension-related income loss also drives some people to seek public assistance they would not otherwise need. An attorney described a client, a mother who stopped driving after her license was suspended—as the law requires. She lost her job and could not find another. With a child to feed, she turned to public support. **“I’m sure,”** the attorney stated, **“that the government did not want this lady to lose her job and then go on government assistance. . . . You pushed someone into welfare because she couldn't afford her ticket.”**

Whether through job loss or underemployment, the economic cost of suspension is staggering. **North Carolinians with a suspended license lose an estimated \$6.5 to \$8.8 billion in income in the first year of suspension alone.**<sup>11</sup> This is a catastrophic financial drain on low-wealth families and communities.

## Harms to Mental and Physical Health

Drivers' health can suffer due to suspension.<sup>12</sup> Losing reliable transportation—and possibly a job and employer-sponsored health insurance along with it—forces people to skip medical appointments, delay care and forego prescriptions.

For some, this is literally a matter of life and death. One attorney recalled a client with cancer who lived in Raleigh but traveled to Duke University Hospital in Durham for treatment. In addition to managing the disease, the client had “to work out the challenges of medical transport or getting a friend to drive them.” Another attorney described a pregnant client with a suspended license who was debating whether to drive to her prenatal care appointment. As the attorney put it, no one should have to decide,

“I'm not going to go to my medical appointment because I'm afraid I'm going to get pulled over and owe more money.” Or “I am not going to get this medication because I'm trying to pay my court debt back.” I don't think anyone should have to choose between their health and paying court debt.

A suspension can also cause considerable mental harm. Drivers describe the stress associated with lost income, driving without a license and the struggle to meet basic needs. A driver in western North Carolina, described the weight of his suspension in a video interview.

It was constantly on my mind to have to pay [court debt]. . . . That's something that's always over your shoulder, because it's 'I really need to get a place for my family. I really need to get food on the table, but if I don't get these fines and fees paid . . . I'm still moving nowhere.’”<sup>13</sup>

Not being able to provide for his family produced a feeling of “hopelessness.” Before his fines and fees were waived, “there wasn't an end in sight.” With his license restored, his outlook changed dramatically. **“I was able to get a house, a vehicle, a good job, and the mental wellbeing is what you call priceless. The fact that I can wake up and . . . I can provide for my family, that meant everything to me.”**

## Epidemic of Driver's License Suspension in North Carolina

Parents may feel shame or inadequacy around not being able to fully take care of or support their children. The individual quoted above put it this way:

At some point in time, your kids are going to play sports. They're going to want to do something, even taking them to a show. And then it bears down on your mental that you start feeling like "Hey, man, it's not fair to my kids, I'm punishing my kids for something I did that I cannot fix."

Another interviewee emphasized the long-term effect on children. Poverty, homelessness and other childhood traumas shape children in the present and are linked to higher rates of mental health challenges and addiction later on. By limiting parents' mobility and choices, suspensions are **"passing on the crippling effects . . . to those children."**

These financial, emotional and health-related burdens reinforce one another. Income loss makes it harder to take care of one's health; poor health makes it harder to work or look for work; and shame and anxiety erode mental well-being. Together, they create a self-reinforcing cycle that pushes financial stability, and the possibility of license reinstatement, further out of reach.

## Suspensions Kickstart a Vicious Cycle of Legal Involvement

A driver whose license is suspended can't drive legally. Yet many people continue to do so.<sup>14</sup> They may be unaware that their license has been suspended, or they feel they have no choice. It's not because **"they're trying to be a rebel and buck the system,"** as one attorney observed, **"but because we live in North Carolina and in 90% of the state, probably more, you need a car, you need to be able to drive in order to do anything."**

One individual described the reality she faced when her license was suspended.

I lived all my life in rural areas where there was no public transportation. There were no sidewalks. There was no walking to the store or walking to a doctor's office. There was none of that. I didn't even have neighbors I could see. . . . The only way you can get groceries or get to a doctor or even get to court for a ticket [was to drive].

She also described the bind the suspension created when she had a court date.

## Epidemic of Driver's License Suspension in North Carolina

There's only one way in and one way out of the courthouse. It's a very small area and everybody knows everybody. For me to drive myself to court, in my car with no tags and no insurance, you know, it's not a good plan. . . . So, you're damned if you do and you're damned if you don't.

Drivers who are caught driving with a suspended license are charged with Driving While License Revoked (DWLR), a misdemeanor offense in North Carolina. In addition to imposing its own fines and fees, DWLR is a criminal charge that can appear on background checks, with consequences for employment, housing and more.

North Carolina sees roughly 200,000 DWLR cases each year, making it the second most common source of Failure to Appear (FTA) and Failure to Pay (FTP) suspensions in the state.<sup>15</sup> Suspensions and DWLR are tightly intertwined. A minor motor vehicle violation can trigger a suspension; the suspension can then lead to DWLR. The DWLR, in turn, generates new court dates and debt, which can result in additional FTAs and FTPs and new suspensions. Roughly one in four North Carolinians with an FTA or FTP suspension also has at least one DWLR charge on their record.<sup>16</sup>

Driving While License Revoked also drives up costs in other ways. Although the offense has nothing to do with unsafe driving, a DWLR conviction often increases insurance rates. In 2025, a DWLR charge nearly doubled the average auto insurance premium in North Carolina.<sup>17</sup> As a result of accumulating bills and suspension-related income loss, some drivers drop their insurance coverage or registration. Driving without insurance and driving with expired or missing registration are among the most common offenses associated with FTA and FTP suspensions.<sup>18</sup> In this way, a single incident can produce a dizzying series of violations, mounting debt and additional suspensions.

One interviewee described the convolutions of this accelerating spiral.

If you don't go to court, they suspend [your license]. If you do go to court and you can't pay it . . . they suspend it. Once it's suspended, you start getting Driving With License Revoked, you know, that's tons . . . of money. . . . Your insurance lapses because you don't have the money to pay it on the day it's due. Then you get a ticket because you're driving with no insurance. Odds are, you're not going to have the money to pay to have your insurance reinstated, to pay the fee for the court costs and the fine for driving with no insurance.

And if you don't go to court the day you're supposed to, because you're working and trying to get the money together to pay to get your insurance reinstated, you're also going to incur a \$200 per charge Failure to Appear fine. If you have a fine for \$200 for not having insurance, and then the court costs on top of it, and you don't go to court, you also have a \$200 fee [for the FTA] on top of that. . . . Then if your license is revoked, there's a license reinstatement fee on top of that. It's kind of like getting a credit card to pay for a credit card that you use to buy air with. You know, it's pretty vicious cycle in and of itself.

This cycle is so pernicious that the same individual suggested, only half-jokingly, going to extremes to avoid it.

The best advice I can give people is if you can, go without food. Pay your insurance and pay your fines. Because . . . once you start accumulating those fines, you're screwed. I mean, it's just going to get worse and worse and worse, until they get you to a point where you're homeless because you can't pay your rent and you can't pay your power because you can't drive anymore.

## Systemic Consequences

### Suspensions Are Racially Inequitable

Although this report centers the voices and stories of people with suspended licenses, suspensions for Failure to Pay and Failure to Appear also produce systemic harms, including disproportionate impact on Black and Brown communities.<sup>19</sup> Reflecting economic and racial inequities, Black and Hispanic drivers in North Carolina are more likely to have a suspended license than White drivers. **Non-Hispanic Black adults make up 18.3% of the state's population but account for 40% of all suspensions—more than twice their share of the population.** In contrast, non-Hispanic White adults are 57.4% of the state's population, but only 34.7% of suspensions.<sup>20</sup>

Disparities among Hispanic drivers are harder to measure because the court system groups them with other racial and ethnic identities into a broad "other" category. Even so, that category accounts for 22% of all suspensions, of which Hispanic drivers are undoubtedly the largest portion. Hispanic adults make up only 12% of the state's population, suggesting that Hispanic drivers, like Black drivers, are disproportionately harmed by suspension.<sup>21</sup>

## Suspensions Are a Drag on Employers and the State Economy

License suspensions hinder employers and limit economic activity. They prevent businesses across North Carolina from hiring otherwise qualified workers and contribute to the state's ongoing labor shortage. In a 2024 survey of North Carolina small business owners, 68% reported difficulty finding qualified workers. **More than three quarters (77%) said license suspensions negatively affected their ability to hire reliable employees, and 73% favored ending debt-based license suspension.**<sup>22</sup>

Additionally, **North Carolina forfeits nearly \$685 million in economic activity every year because of debt-based license suspensions.**<sup>23</sup> Early research indicates that comprehensive reform can improve a state's overall employment rate, and even limited reforms contribute to employment growth for non-White groups.<sup>24</sup> Restoring suspended licenses would help North Carolina build a stronger, more dynamic workforce.

## Suspensions Waste State Resources

License suspensions consume valuable public resources.<sup>25</sup> Every phase of suspension—from the initial moment of noncompliance to additional charges and court dates to the hearing to clear the suspension—requires considerable administrative effort from the courts. A study from Washington State estimated that a single filing for Driving With License Suspended (the equivalent of North Carolina's Driving While License Revoked or DWLR) cost the court system nearly \$1,000 in 2015.<sup>26</sup> Between 2013 and 2017, roughly 160,000 DWLRs were filed annually in North Carolina courts.<sup>27</sup> A rough but conservative estimate that assumes each North Carolina case cost half as much as in Washington suggests the state would have spent about **\$80 million annually on DWLR prosecutions alone** during those years. Since then, the annual number of DWLR cases has grown, pushing costs up.

License suspension also diverts law enforcement away from core public safety responsibilities and toward policing people for non-driving reasons. Every traffic stop and citation for DWLR because of an FTA or FTP suspension, for example, represents resources sunk into a practice with little public benefit. Similarly, DMV staff time spent tracking suspensions and restoring licenses could serve other, more central purposes. The Colorado DMV estimated that it spent more than 8,500 staff hours annually on nearly 17,000 non-driving suspensions.<sup>28</sup> North

Carolina issues upwards of 280,000 non-driving suspensions each year.<sup>29</sup> Applying Colorado's estimate to North Carolina yields 137,000 DMV staff hours—or about 68 full-time positions—annually devoted to non-driving suspensions.

## Barriers to License Reinstatement

A driver seeking to reinstate their license must navigate a complicated legal process made more difficult by poverty. The first challenge is simply obtaining the necessary information. Many drivers are unaware of how many suspensions they have, where they originated or how much they owe—or even where to start. Court records are difficult to interpret. They use obscure abbreviations and codes. (By way of illustration, Appendix A consists of the first two pages of an 11-page record.) Records are sometimes inaccurate. Charges or suspensions that were previously resolved may still appear, while other information, like amount owed, may be entered incorrectly.

Second, drivers have to pay all their accumulated court debt. The court debt for a single suspension can total several hundred dollars; multiple suspensions can exceed \$1,000. As one paralegal stated, the people she assisted really wanted their license. **“They're trying their very best to get the money to get reinstated. But there's just so many hoops that they have to go through—and they have to pay so much money—that it can be such a challenge.”**

A person who can't afford their fines and fees—from a traffic ticket or any other charge— can ask the court to waive their court debt by filing **Form 415** (click on bold text for link). However, even if the form is correctly filled out and filed, a judge can still deny it in whole or in part.

Third, drivers seeking to clear their suspension have to go to court, often several times. They must overcome their fear or distrust of the legal system, determine how to file the proper motion in each county they have a suspension (it varies from court to court), and then appear for hearings—sometimes several times. As one attorney explained, **“For folks that have to travel a lot or have lived in a bunch of different places that might mean going to five or six different counties in order to clean it up. It can be a pretty cumbersome process that is not feasible for folks without a driver's license.”**

## Epidemic of Driver's License Suspension in North Carolina

Once in court, most individuals seeking license reinstatement must navigate the legal system without a lawyer by their side. Lawyers can make a critical difference by guiding their clients through what is often an intimidating and unfamiliar process.<sup>30</sup> They are more likely to know how to seek financial relief from the court, what kinds of information to present and how to best prepare. As one attorney said, it helps **“to know who you're talking to, what role they play in making the decision and what makes them most likely to grant relief.”**

Drivers who manage to resolve their suspensions with the courts are still not done. They must return to the DMV and pay license restoration and service fees. They might also have to attend a hearing that—depending on DMV backlogs—could be scheduled months in the future. Until this final step is completed, drivers remain unlicensed. If they drive, they run the risk of getting pulled back into the same suspension cycle they are trying to escape.

The reinstatement process can deter even the most motivated driver. Sometimes it simply isn't possible without outside assistance. This was the case for Lisa, the peer support specialist we interviewed. She relied on Benevolence Farm, the re-entry program she participated in, for help in clearing her suspensions in three counties: Surry, Stokes and Forsyth. In her interview, Lisa recalled the effort she made just to get the process started.

Surry County, I had to go to Benevolence Farm to drive me from Burlington to Mount Airy, which is a pretty good hike to file the 415 Motion with the clerk's office and get a court date in person. Forsyth County, I had to go to the clerk's office to file the motion. Then when the motion was approved to go on the docket, I had to go back to get the court date. They would not do that over the phone or online.

The judge in Surry County converted her court debt to a civil judgment, which—despite its drawbacks—allowed her to clear that suspension. The Stokes and Forsyth courts denied her request to waive her court debt, which was over \$2,000. She borrowed money from Benevolence Farm to pay it.

With her suspensions cleared, she regained her license from the DMV. But two DWLR convictions left her with an insurance policy that cost almost \$400 per month. Benevolence Farm connected her with an attorney who succeeded in removing the DWLR convictions (though this meant she had to return to Stokes County again). Even then, Lisa had to finish out her existing six-month insurance policy before she could qualify for a lower rate. In total, it took Lisa seven or eight months, many cross-county trips, a significant loan and the help of an attorney to get her license. She credited Benevolence Farm for making it possible.

## Epidemic of Driver's License Suspension in North Carolina

I would have never been able to do that had it not been for Benevolence, because we went from Burlington to Forsyth County five times, just to handle those cases. We had to go to Stokes County three times to handle those. We only had to go to Surry twice to handle those. If I had not had that supportive environment, I could have never pulled that off.

Reflecting on her experience, Lisa highlighted the advantages she had that others do not.

If I hadn't had a phone, if I hadn't had support that knew about the Form 415, you know, it came together perfect for me. I know other people that have no idea the Form 415 exists. They don't have connections to get an attorney to help them get their stuff figured out. They don't have the phone to call these counties and find out what they owe and what the case numbers are and all the information you have to have to file a Form 415. They don't have a legal ride or ways or means to get to a bunch of different counties to handle issues like that. So, I'm among the very, very, very blessed and very fortunate.

Lisa's reinstatement journey demonstrates the many barriers related to information, money, transportation, and legal advice that drivers with a suspended license must overcome. She summed up the problem succinctly: **"It should absolutely not be that hard to do things the right way and function as a legal, productive member of society."**

## A Path Forward for North Carolina

Failure to Appear and Failure to Pay suspensions are bad for North Carolina and its residents. As one formerly suspended interviewee told us plainly, **"You don't have to be a researcher to figure out that whatever it is they've been doing all these years isn't working."**

To address this problem, North Carolina should join the majority of states that have eliminated license suspension for Failure to Appear and/or Failure to Pay.<sup>31</sup> Ending these suspensions would remove a barrier to economic stability for hundreds of thousands of North Carolinians and prevent extensive and ongoing harm in the future.<sup>32</sup>

Until broader reform is enacted, several smaller changes could reduce the damage caused by suspension by alleviating some of the conditions that make this a penalty imposed almost entirely on poor people. The following is a partial list of modest but important steps.

- **Cap the suspension period** so it is not indefinite but time limited.
- **Ability to pay determinations.** Courts should set fines and fees at an affordable rate. To that end, the court system should adopt a standardized guideline for determining ability to pay. Fees should be automatically waived for people who receive public benefits or who are deemed indigent.
- **Reasonable payment plans.** Drivers should be able to pay small, affordable amounts over time for no extra fee.
- **Opt-out text reminder system.** Text reminders—especially those that include practical information about how to prepare for court—are a powerful but underused tool. North Carolina should adopt an opt-out text reminder system, in which people receive reminders unless they choose not to.
- **Adopt remote court hearings, alternative scheduling and other practices** geared toward overcoming some of the challenges involved in going to court.
- **Expand the statewide Driver's License Restoration Project and other local initiatives** that help people get their licenses back.
- **Mass relief efforts.** Encourage your district attorney to forgive the court debt of a group of people at one time.
- **For help filling out Form 415** asking the court to waive fines and fees, individuals and advocates can use the **county-level guides** (click on bold text for link) developed by the North Carolina Fines and Fees Coalition.

The indefinite suspension of driver's licenses does little to enforce compliance with the courts and does a lot to create and entrench poverty. Drivers with a traffic ticket aren't willfully evading justice but are prevented—by economic hardship and the rigidity of the legal system—from following court orders. Suspensions hurt people, communities, businesses, and the state. As one attorney suggested, "We need to figure out a solution that will actually meet the problem." It's time North Carolina left the suspension highway and got on the road to greater fairness and prosperity.

# Appendix

## Two Pages of 11-Page Court Record of License Suspension



NORTH CAROLINA DIVISION OF MOTOR VEHICLES  
RDLSI/DRIVING RECORD

REPORT TYPE: CERTIFIED REPORT PAGE NO: 1  
 NAME: [REDACTED] DATE: 12-19-24  
 ADDRESS: [REDACTED]  
 CITY: [REDACTED] STATE: [REDACTED] ZIP: [REDACTED] TOTAL POINTS: 0  
 DOB: [REDACTED] HEIGHT: [REDACTED] IN. SEX: M EYES: BRO HAIR: BRO RACE: W  
 PRIMARY LICENSE NO: [REDACTED]  
 SECONDARY LICENSE NO: [REDACTED] NON-RESIDENT MILITARY: N REAL ID: N  
 ORG. ISS.DT: 03-21-94 OS DL NO: [REDACTED] OS STATE: [REDACTED]

\*\*\* DRIVER LICENSE STATUS: CDL B SUSPENDED \*\*\*

| CLASS | GRP | TYP | ISSUE DT | EXPIR DT | CDL | DISQ | PROB | LMT | COND | PRIV | RESTR | STATUS  |
|-------|-----|-----|----------|----------|-----|------|------|-----|------|------|-------|---------|
| I     | O   |     | 02-08-24 | 03-19-32 | N   | N    | N    | N   | N    | N    | N     | ID CARD |

ENDORS:

CRD TRNS: [REDACTED]

| CLASS | GRP | TYP | ISSUE DT | EXPIR DT | CDL | DISQ | PROB | LMT | COND | PRIV | RESTR | STATUS    |
|-------|-----|-----|----------|----------|-----|------|------|-----|------|------|-------|-----------|
| B     | D   |     | 09-20-02 | 03-19-08 | Y   | N    | N    | N   | N    | N    | N     | SUSPENDED |

ENDORS: H N

RSTR: 0 NONE

| CLASS | GRP | TYP | ISSUE DT | EXPIR DT | CDL | DISQ | PROB | LMT | COND | PRIV | RESTR | STATUS  |
|-------|-----|-----|----------|----------|-----|------|------|-----|------|------|-------|---------|
| B     | O   |     | 05-24-00 | 03-19-08 | Y   | N    | N    | N   | N    | N    | N     | EXPIRED |

ENDORS: H N

RSTR: 0 NONE

| OCCUR/   | CONV/    | NATURE OF RECORD OR DIVISION ACTION         | POINTS |
|----------|----------|---|--------|
| BEG DATE | END DATE |   |        |
|          |          | MED CERTIFICATION STATUS : NOT A CDL HOLDER |        |

SCHBUS: NOT ELIG FOR SCHOOL BUS DRIVER CERTIFICATION

|          |          |  |  |
|----------|----------|--|--|
| 09-10-18 | 11-07-18 | CONV: (663)DRV WHILE LIC REVOKED-NO ACTION<br>COURT: DMVSC-MOTOR VEHICLE DIVIS, SC<br>COURT: AOC #: [REDACTED] CITATION ID: [REDACTED] |  |
|----------|----------|--|--|

|          |          |   |  |
|----------|----------|---|--|
| 03-25-16 | INDEF    | SUSP: FAILURE TO APPEAR   |  |
| 11-03-15 | 01-22-16 | CONV: (634)FAIL TO APPEAR<br>COURT: ALAMANCE COUNTY COURT, NC<br>COURT: AOC #: [REDACTED] CITATION ID: [REDACTED] |  |

|          |       |                         |  |
|----------|-------|-------------------------|--|
| 03-25-16 | INDEF | SUSP: FAILURE TO APPEAR |  |
|----------|-------|-------------------------|--|

\*\*\*\* CONTINUE ON TO PAGE 2 \*\*\*\*

I certify that the foregoing is a true copy of the driver's license record of the within named person on the file in the Driver License Section of the N.C. Division of Motor Vehicles

Signed

Commissioner, Division of Motor Vehicles

Epidemic of Driver's License Suspension in North Carolina



NORTH CAROLINA DIVISION OF MOTOR VEHICLES  
RDLSD/DRIVING RECORD

PAGE NO: 2  
DATE: 12-19-24

| CUST ID    | OCUR/<br>BEG DATE | CONV/<br>END DATE | NATURE OF RECORD OR DIVISION ACTION  | POINTS |
|------------|-------------------|-------------------|--|--------|
| [REDACTED] | 11-03-15          | 01-22-16          | CONV: (634) FAIL TO APPEAR<br>COURT: ALAMANCE COUNTY COURT, NC<br>COURT: AOC #: [REDACTED] CITATION ID: [REDACTED]                           |        |
|            | 04-05-13          | 03-19-21          | REN ISS: ID EN:  |        |
|            | 04-13-11          | 04-13-11          | SUSP: 3 OFFENSES OF DRIVING WHILE LICENSE SUSPENDED  |        |
|            | 09-04-10          | 04-13-11          | CONV: (606) DRIVING WHILE LICENSE REVOKED<br>COURT: ALAMANCE COUNTY COURT, NC<br>COURT: AOC #: [REDACTED] CITATION ID: [REDACTED]            |        |
|            | 08-16-04          | 01-25-05          | CONV: (606) DRIVING WHILE LICENSE REVOKED<br>COURT: NEW HANOVER COUNTY COURT, NC<br>COURT: AOC #: [REDACTED] CITATION ID: [REDACTED]         |        |
|            | 05-28-05          | 10-06-05          | CONV: (606) DRIVING WHILE LICENSE REVOKED<br>COURT: PERSON COUNTY COURT, NC<br>COURT: AOC #: [REDACTED] CITATION ID: [REDACTED]              |        |
|            | 06-02-09          | 04-02-09          | SUSP: FAILURE TO PAY FINE<br>CONV: (635) FAIL TO PAY<br>COURT: ALAMANCE COUNTY COURT, NC<br>COURT: AOC #: [REDACTED] CITATION ID: [REDACTED] |        |
|            | 01-16-09          | 03-19-13          | DUP ISS: ID EN:  |        |
|            | 11-07-08          | 09-05-08          | SUSP: FAILURE TO PAY FINE<br>CONV: (635) FAIL TO PAY<br>COURT: ALAMANCE COUNTY COURT, NC<br>COURT: AOC #: [REDACTED] CITATION ID: [REDACTED] |        |
|            | 04-21-08          | 04-21-08          | SUSP: 3 OFFENSES OF DRIVING WHILE LICENSE SUSPENDED  |        |
|            | 08-20-07          | 04-21-08          | CONV: (606) DRIVING WHILE LICENSE REVOKED<br>COURT: ORANGE COUNTY COURT, NC<br>COURT: AOC #: [REDACTED] CITATION ID: [REDACTED]              |        |
|            | 08-16-04          | 01-25-05          | CONV: (606) DRIVING WHILE LICENSE REVOKED<br>COURT: NEW HANOVER COUNTY COURT, NC<br>COURT: AOC #: [REDACTED] CITATION ID: [REDACTED]         |        |
|            | 05-28-05          | 10-06-05          | CONV: (606) DRIVING WHILE LICENSE REVOKED<br>COURT: PERSON COUNTY COURT, NC  |        |

\*\*\*\* CONTINUE ON TO PAGE 3 \*\*\*\*

I certify that the foregoing is a true copy of the driver's license record of the within named person on the file in the Driver License Section of the N.C. Division of Motor Vehicles

Signed

Commissioner, Division of Motor Vehicles

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> One person can have multiple suspensions, and many people do. Every FTA or FTP, whether it arises in the original case or a new one, leads to a suspension unless it’s resolved in time. A driver must clear all suspensions with the courts before seeking reinstatement with the DMV. Rita Grunberg and Brandon Garrett, “North Carolina Driver’s License Suspension Dashboard,” Wilson Center for Science and Justice at Duke Law, 2025, <https://wcsj-dukela.w.shinyapps.io/ftaftc-dashboard2/>; North Carolina Department of Motor Vehicles, “North Carolina Department of Motor Vehicles Data Extract,” version 1, corrected, June 4, 2025, on file with author.

<sup>2</sup> Unless otherwise specified, all quotations are from interviews conducted by the Poverty Research Project on file with the author.

<sup>3</sup> Jon A. Carnegie and Alan M. Voorhees, *Driver’s License Suspensions, Impacts and Fairness Study*, FHWA-NJ-2007-020 (New Jersey Department of Transportation, 2007), <https://www.nj.gov/transportation/business/research/reports/FHWA-NJ-2007-020-V1.pdf>; Colleen Chien et al., “Estimating the Earnings Loss Associated with a Criminal Record and Suspended Driver’s License,” *Arizona Law Review*, March 7, 2022, <https://digitalcommons.law.scu.edu/facpubs/994>; Emily Dindial et al., *Reckless Lawmaking: How Debt-Based Driver’s License Suspension Laws Impose Harm and Waste Resources* (ACLU, 2021), [https://www.aclu.org/wp-content/uploads/publications/reckless\\_lawmaking\\_aclu\\_final\\_4.19.21.pdf](https://www.aclu.org/wp-content/uploads/publications/reckless_lawmaking_aclu_final_4.19.21.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 2024 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, Table S0802.

<sup>5</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 2024 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, Table B08134.

<sup>6</sup> U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, “30 Percent of Civilian Jobs Require Some Driving in 2016,” *The Economics Daily*, n.d., accessed October 10, 2025, <https://www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2017/30-percent-of-civilian-jobs-require-some-driving-in-2016.htm>.

<sup>7</sup> Carnegie and Voorhees, *Driver’s License Suspensions, Impacts and Fairness Study*; Chien et al., “Estimating the Earnings Loss Associated with a Criminal Record and Suspended Driver’s License”; Dindial et al., *Reckless Lawmaking: How Debt-Based Driver’s License Suspension Laws Impose Harm and Waste Resources*; L. William Seidman Research Institute, *The City of Phoenix Municipal Court’s Compliance Assistance Program, 2016: An Economic Assessment* (Arizona State University, W.P. Carey School of Business, L. William Seidman Research Institute, 2017), <https://finesandfeesjusticecenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Phoenix-license-restoration-pilot-THE-CITY-OF-PHOENIX-MUNICIPAL-COURT%E2%80%99S-COMPLIANCE-ASSISTANCE-PROGRAM.pdf>; Wilson Center for Science and Justice at Duke Law, *Driving Injustice: Consequences and Disparities in North Carolina Criminal Legal and Traffic Debt* (Duke University School of Law, 2021), <https://wcsj.law.duke.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Driving-Injustice-Report-1.pdf>.

<sup>8</sup> Dindial et al., *Reckless Lawmaking: How Debt-Based Driver’s License Suspension Laws Impose Harm and Waste Resources*; Emma B. Sartin et al., “Impacts of Non-Driving Related License Suspensions on Quality of Life: A Qualitative Study,” *Applied Research in Quality of Life* 17, no. 4 (2022): 2211–27, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11482-021-10027-7>; Wilson Center for Science and Justice at Duke Law, *Driving Injustice: Consequences and Disparities in North Carolina Criminal Legal and Traffic Debt*.

<sup>9</sup> Wilson Center for Science and Justice at Duke Law, *Driving Injustice: Consequences and Disparities in North Carolina Criminal Legal and Traffic Debt*. See also, Wilson Center for Science and Justice at Duke Law and Fines and Fees Justice Center, *Debt Sentence: How Fines and Fees Hurt Working Families* (2023), [https://wcsj.law.duke.edu/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Debt\\_Sentence\\_FFJC-Wilson-Center-May-2023.pdf](https://wcsj.law.duke.edu/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Debt_Sentence_FFJC-Wilson-Center-May-2023.pdf).

<sup>10</sup> Thomas v. Haslam, 329 Federal Supplement 3rd 474 (U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Tennessee 2018).

<sup>11</sup> Alexander Cowell and Jessica Smith, “Estimating Earnings Impact of Driver’s License Revocations in North Carolina,” UNC School of Government, *North Carolina Criminal Law*, June 3, 2024, <https://nccriminallaw.sog.unc.edu/estimating-earnings-impact-of-drivers-license-revocations-in-north-carolina/>.

<sup>12</sup> William E. Crozier et al., *Understanding the Impact of Driver’s License Suspension: Lay Opinion in Impacted and Non-Impacted Populations*, nos. 2020–70, Duke Law School Public Law & Legal Theory Series (2020), [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=3645308](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3645308); Dindial et al., *Reckless Lawmaking: How Debt-Based Driver’s License Suspension Laws Impose Harm and Waste Resources*; Alexes Harris and Tyler Smith, “Monetary Sanctions as Chronic and Acute Health Stressors: The Emotional Strain of People Who Owe Court Fines and Fees,” *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 8, no. 2 (2022): 36–56, <https://doi.org/10.7758/RSF.2022.8.2.02>; L. William Seidman Research Institute, *The City of Phoenix Municipal Court’s Compliance Assistance Program, 2016: An Economic Assessment*; Sartin et al., “Impacts of Non-Driving

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Related License Suspensions on Quality of Life"; Wilson Center for Science and Justice at Duke Law and Fines and Fees Justice Center, *Debt Sentence: How Fines and Fees Hurt Working Families*.

<sup>13</sup> Operation Gateway, *415 Campaign*, April 14, 2026, Video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QPe7AGNknXs>.

<sup>14</sup> American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators, *Reducing Suspended Drivers and Alternative Reinstatement Best Practices, 3rd Ed.* (American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators, 2021), <https://aamva.org/getmedia/b92cc79d-560f-4def-879c-6d6e430e4f4d/Reducing-Suspended-Drivers-and-Alternative->; William E. Crozier and Brandon L. Garrett, "Driven to Failure: An Empirical Analysis of Driver's License Suspension in North Carolina," *Duke Law Journal* 69 (2020): 1585–641.

<sup>15</sup> Rita L. Grunberg and Brandon L. Garrett, *Driver's License Suspensions in North Carolina* (Wilson Center for Science and Justice at Duke Law, 2025), 4, <https://wcsj.law.duke.edu/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/Drivers-License-Suspensions-in-North-Carolina-Report-July-2025.pdf>.

<sup>16</sup> Crozier and Garrett, "Driven to Failure: An Empirical Analysis of Driver's License Suspension in North Carolina."

<sup>17</sup> Susan Meyer, *2025 Auto Insurance Trends* (The Zebra, 2025), <https://www.thezebra.com/resources/car-insurance/auto-insurance-trends-report/>.

<sup>18</sup> Grunberg and Garrett, "North Carolina Driver's License Suspension Dashboard."

<sup>19</sup> See Carnegie and Voorhees, *Driver's License Suspensions, Impacts and Fairness Study*; Maureen R. Waller et al., "Predation and the Disproportionate Risk of Driver's License Suspensions in Economically and Racially Marginalized Communities," *Socius* 10 (April 2024), <https://doi.org/10.1177/23780231241234632>; Wilson Center for Science and Justice at Duke Law, *Driving Injustice: Consequences and Disparities in North Carolina Criminal Legal and Traffic Debt*.

<sup>20</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 2024 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimate, Table B01001; Grunberg and Garrett, "North Carolina Driver's License Suspension Dashboard."

<sup>21</sup> Grunberg and Garrett, "North Carolina Driver's License Suspension Dashboard." An earlier analysis, conducted before the court system adopted the "Other" category, showed that Hispanic North Carolinians were 8% of the state's 16 years and older population, but they were 24% of FTAs. Crozier and Garrett, "Driven to Failure: An Empirical Analysis of Driver's License Suspension in North Carolina," 1608.5/1/26 3:45:00 PM

<sup>22</sup> "North Carolina Small Businesses Support Expanding Occupational Licensing for Justice-Impacted Individuals," Small Business Majority, April 2, 2024, <https://smallbusinessmajority.org/our-research/workforce/north-carolina-small-businesses-support-expanding-occupational-licensing-justice-impacted-individuals>.

<sup>23</sup> Doug Kellogg, "North Carolina Economy Loses \$685 Million Due to Driver's License Suspensions over Debt," State Policy, *Americans for Tax Reform*, April 29, 2024, <https://atr.org/north-carolina-economy-loses-685-million-due-to-drivers-license-suspensions-over-debt/>. As this estimate is based on suspensions for Failure to Pay only, the total loss for both types of suspension (FTP and FTA) is certainly higher.

<sup>24</sup> Robert Apel and Colleen Chien, *Impact of Debt-Based License Suspension on Statewide Employment*, Draft (Paper Prisons Initiative, 2025),

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1qt\\_88LQkvxGMtdzq1ygMAppCOQhoBH0Cm/edit](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1qt_88LQkvxGMtdzq1ygMAppCOQhoBH0Cm/edit); Civil Rights Corp, *The Fiscal Impact of Debt-Based Driver's License Suspensions* (Civil Rights Corp, 2021),

<https://civilrightscorps.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/7QZT9ZsRTT6YYwgICeYQ.pdf>; Fines and Fees Justice Center, *Stepping on the Gas: Accelerating Florida's Economic Growth by Restoring the Freedom to Drive* (Fines and Fees Justice Center, 2023), <https://finesandfeesjusticecenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Stepping-on-the-Gas-Feb-20231.pdf>.

<sup>25</sup> American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators, *Reducing Suspended Drivers and Alternative Reinstatement Best Practices, 3rd Ed.*; Civil Rights Corp, *The Fiscal Impact of Debt-Based Driver's License Suspensions*; Dindial et al., *Reckless Lawmaking: How Debt-Based Driver's License Suspension Laws Impose Harm and Waste Resources*; Matthew Menendez et al., *The Steep Costs of Criminal Justice Fees and Fines* (Brennan Center for Justice, n.d.), accessed October 8, 2025, <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/steep-costs-criminal-justice-fees-and-fines>.

<sup>26</sup> ACLU of Washington, *Driven to Fail: The High Cost of Washington's Most Ineffective Crime - DWLS III* (ACLU of Washington, n.d.), accessed October 10, 2025, <https://www.aclu-wa.org/app/uploads/2017/02/dwls-iii-report.pdf>.

<sup>27</sup> Crozier and Garrett, "Driven to Failure: An Empirical Analysis of Driver's License Suspension in North Carolina."

<sup>28</sup> Joni Hirsch and Priya Sarathy Jones, "Driver's License Suspension for Unpaid Fines and Fees: The Movement for Reform," *University of Michigan Journal of Law Reform* 54 (2021): 875–91, <https://doi.org/10.36646/mjlr.54.4.drivers>.

<sup>29</sup> Grunberg and Garrett, “North Carolina Driver’s License Suspension Dashboard.”

<sup>30</sup> One third of respondents with a suspended license in a North Carolina survey reported they had not tried to get their license reinstated because they were “were afraid to go to court to do so.” Crozier et al., *Understanding the Impact of Driver’s License Suspension: Lay Opinion in Impacted and Non-Impacted Populations*, 15.

<sup>31</sup> “Maps,” *Free to Drive*, December 24, 2024, <https://www.freetodrive.org/maps/>.

<sup>32</sup> See North Carolina House Bill 980, “An Act to Remove Barriers to Employment Due to Court Debt and to Appropriate Funds to Implement a Text Reminder System for Court Dates, HB 980, North Carolina General Assembly 2025–2026 (2025), <https://www.ncleg.gov/Sessions/2025/Bills/House/PDF/H980v1.pdf>.”

## About the Poverty Research Project

The Poverty Research Project is part of The Justice Institute at North Carolina Central University School of Law. We conduct rigorous yet accessible nonpartisan research on economic hardship in North Carolina to inform public understanding, strengthen policy discussions and advance solutions to reduce poverty in the state. Our work focuses on three central goals: increasing awareness of poverty-related issues, collaborating with partners, and providing students with meaningful research and learning opportunities.

Website: <https://www.nccu.edu/law/academics/poverty-research-project>

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/nccu-poverty-research-project/about/>

Bluesky: <https://bsky.app/profile/nccupovresproject.bsky.social>