



# Driving Opportunities: TRUE PUBLIC SAFETY

Ending driver's license suspension for unpaid traffic tickets and missed court dates in North Carolina is a common-sense reform that cannot wait.

## The Opportunity

Nearly 1 million North Carolinians have a suspended driver's license, not because they are unsafe drivers, but because they cannot afford to pay traffic fines and fees or missed a court date. In a rural state such as North Carolina, a driver's license is key for mobility and opportunity. Ending unnecessary license suspensions will improve public safety by preventing avoidable risks, retaining law enforcement resources, and keeping people from falling deeper into legal and financial trouble.

## Why It Matters

### Driver's Licenses Lead to Safer Roads

- ▶ People with valid licenses typically keep their auto insurance active.
- ▶ Because 75% of people with suspended licenses still need to drive to work, school, childcare, and medical appointments, ensuring they can stay licensed reduces the number of unlicensed drivers.
- ▶ When more drivers can remain licensed and insured, everyone benefits from safer roads and reduced financial burdens after accidents.

### Driver's License Preserve Law Enforcement and Court Resources

- ▶ By keeping people licensed after non-safety-related issues, North Carolina can free officers to focus on safety, allow prosecutors to prioritize meaningful cases, and help judges manage more efficient dockets.
- ▶ Since 40% of suspensions involve issues unrelated to driving safety, keeping people licensed will allow law enforcement and court actors to focus time and resources on real public safety matters.

### Driver's Licenses Reduce Unneeded Legal Involvement

- ▶ When people can maintain valid licenses, they avoid new charges, additional fees, and the risk of incarceration.
- ▶ People with valid licenses often maintain insurance and registration, therefore avoiding additional charges or legal complications, and strengthening public safety.

## The Evidence-Based Reforms

North Carolina must act to improve opportunity and improve rates of payment and court appearance.

- End driver's license suspensions for unpaid traffic debt and missed court dates; and
- Replace with evidence-based practices such as court reminders, ability-to-pay assessments, and reasonable payment plans.