

Date of Hearing: April 7, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

Ash Kalra, Chair

AB 2195 (Celeste Rodriguez) – As Introduced February 19, 2026

SUBJECT: CHILD SUPPORT: LICENSE SUSPENSIONS

KEY ISSUE: SHOULD THE PROHIBITION ON SUSPENDING LOW-INCOME CHILD SUPPORT OBLIGORS' DRIVERS LICENSES BE EXTENDED TO PROHIBIT THE SUSPENSION OF ANY OCCUPATIONAL OR PROFESSIONAL LICENSE?

SYNOPSIS

When a parent falls behind on their child support payment, it is possible for their license to be suspended. This authorization can include any type of professional license and driver's licenses. For an initial missed payment, the parent ordered to pay support (the noncustodial parent or obligor) receives at least 5-months notice that their license may be suspended. During that time, the obligor may come back into compliance with the original order, seek a modification to the order, or otherwise coordinate with their local child support agency (LCSA) to find resolution. In 2022, the Legislature enacted SB 1055 (Kamlager) Chap. 830, Stats. 2022 which prohibited an obligor's drivers license from being suspended if the obligor's income was at or below 70% of the median income for their county of residence. The justification behind the prohibition rested on the concern that drivers licenses not only allow obligors to access other elements of every day life such as medical appointments and child care but, particularly for low-income earners, suspending their license further hinders their ability to make a living and comply with the underlying child support order. This bill, which would expand that prohibition on the suspension of drivers licenses for low-income earners to apply to all licenses, rests on a similar justification – namely that suspending someone's license for failure to comply with a child support order is not only punitive but makes it less likely that they will be able to make the amount of income necessary to comply with the order. Opponents of the bill, who represent the state's LCSAs, raise concern that license suspension is a tool that LCSAs rely on to get obligors to contact the LCSA when they are unable to make the support amount to make a necessary modification or otherwise address the concern. As with most policy proposals that come through this Committee, it seems that the answer may lie somewhere between the two positions. Potential resolutions are discussed in the body of this analysis.

This bill is sponsored by the Western Center on Law and Poverty. It is supported by a number of legal services organizations, workforce training and restorative justice advocates. It is opposed by the California Child Support Association. Should this bill be approved by this Committee, it will be heard next by the Committee on Business and Professions.

SUMMARY: Prohibits any license held by someone who owes child support from being suspended if their annual household income is at or below 70 percent of the median income in their county of residence.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Imposes on states receiving public benefit block grants certain requirements relating to the collection of child and family support, including the requirement that states have and utilize a

procedure for withholding, suspending, or restricting the licenses, including the driver's licenses, of those with overdue child or family support obligations. (42 U.S.C. Sections 654(20), 666 (a)(16).)

- 2) Requires a local child support agency, as part of the state's license suspension program for obligors owing overdue support, to maintain a list of the persons who are not in compliance with court-ordered child or family support payments and submit an updated version of the list to the Department of Child Support Services (DCSS) on a monthly basis. (Family Code Section 17520 (b). All further statutory references are to the Family Code unless otherwise stated.)
- 3) Provides that obligors are not in compliance if they are over 30 days in arrears in making payments in full on a court-ordered child or family support obligation. (Section 17520 (a)(4).)
- 4) For purposes of the state's license suspension program, defines licenses to include membership in the State Bar of California; a certificate, credential, permit, registration, or any other authorization issued by a board that allows a person to engage in a business, occupation, or profession; appointment and commission by the Secretary of State as a notary public; any driver's license issued by the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV); any commercial fishing license issued by the Department of Fish and Wildlife and, to the extent required by federal law or regulations, any license used for recreational purposes; and all licenses, certificates, credentials, permits, registrations, or any other authorization issued by a board that allows a person to engage in a business, occupation, or profession. (Section 17520 (a)(5).)
- 5) Requires DCSS to consolidate the lists it receives from local child support agencies as part of the state's license suspension program, and, within 30 days of receipt, provide a copy of the consolidated list to each board responsible for issuing licenses subject to suspension. In cases involving licenses other than a non-commercial driver's license, requires a licensing board, if it determines that an applicant for licensure or renewal is on the most recent list but is otherwise eligible for licensure, to withhold issuance or renewal of the license. (Section 17520 (c), (e).)
- 6) For driver's licenses, other than a commercial license, requires the DMV to notify the obligor of the overdue payments and issue a 150-day temporary license to give the obligor time to pay the overdue child or family support. The 150-day temporary license may be renewed for one additional 150-day period upon a showing of good cause. Allows the DMV to issue a non-temporary license to the applicant only if the applicant pays the overdue child or family support. (Section 17520 (e)(2).)
- 7) Allows DCSS, when economically feasible, to provide a list of the support obligors who are more than four months in arrears on child or family support payments to the covered licensing boards and request that these obligors have their licenses suspended. The board must provide a notice of the intent to suspend the license in 150 days if the obligor does not pay the overdue child or family support. Provides that this temporary license may not be renewed. (Section 17520 (e)(3).)
- 8) When an obligor comes into compliance with a support order, requires the local child support agency to issue a notice to the obligor and the relevant board stating that the obligor is in

compliance. Upon receipt, requires the board to process the release and issue the requested license for the remainder of the licensing term. (Section 17520 (l).)

- 9) Requires DHCD to set income thresholds for persons or families of low income, moderate income, and median income, based on the median income in the geographic area, for the purpose of determining eligibility for certain public benefits, and to set forth the income levels in regulations. (Health & Safety Code Section 50093.)
- 10) Prohibits DCSS from including in the list sent to DMV pursuant to provisions authorizing DCSS to enforce child support obligations for the purpose of denying, withholding, or suspending a driver's license, the information of a support obligor found to be out of compliance with a support order if the annual household income of the support obligor is at or below 70 percent of the median income for the county in which the department or the local child support agency believes the support obligor resides. (Family Code Section 17520.5 (a).)

FISCAL EFFECT: As currently in print this bill is keyed fiscal.

COMMENTS: When a noncustodial parent fails to comply with an active child support order, that past-due amount is referred to as "arrears." Once an obligor is out of compliance for 30 days, existing law requires the Local Child Support Agency (LCSA) to include their name and information in a list sent to the Department of Child Support Services (DCSS), which is then compiled by the DCSS and transmitted to the relevant licensing body on a monthly basis. The licensing boards then engage in a notice procedure specific to the individual board to alert the obligor that they will withhold either the issuance or renewal of the obligor's license and issue a temporary license valid for 150 days if the obligor is otherwise eligible. (Family Code Section 17520 (b) – (e), see also: *Licenses and Passports*, California Department of Child Support Services available at: <https://childsupport.ca.gov/drivers-license-passport-release/>.) In other words, two months after failing to comply with an active child support order (one month for the LCSA to report to the department, and another month for the department to report to the relevant board), an obligor may receive notice from their licensing board that they will be operating on a temporary license for the next five months (150 days). Only after the five-month period has elapsed will the obligor's full license be subject to suspension or revocation unless the obligor has come into compliance with the underlying order. Presumably during that time most obligors could have the capacity to contact their LCSA to either set up a payment plan, request a modification of their child support order, or otherwise determine a path forward to provide child support to the custodial parent.

While somewhat counterintuitive, the license suspension process is intended to incentivize obligors who may fall behind in their payments to make up those arrears, thereby encouraging full payment of support to California's children. Recognizing the potentially outsized impact of suspending the drivers license on a low-income earner, the Legislature enacted SB 1055 (Kamlager) Chap. 830, Stats. 2022 which prohibited, beginning in January 2025, the suspension of drivers licenses for obligors whose annual income was at 70 percent or below the median income for their county, effectuated by prohibiting DCSS from transmitting those obligors' names to the DMV. The sponsors of SB 1055 argued that ensuring low-income obligors retain access to their drivers' licenses would promote compliance with child support orders: "there is substantial reason to believe that SB 1055 will result in higher collections as more non-custodial parents will not lose their jobs or lose hours after having their license suspended." (Assembly Judiciary Committee analysis of SB 1055 (June 8, 2022).)

This bill would expand the statute enacted via SB 1055 to prohibit the suspension of *any* license for obligors whose annual income is at 70 percent or below the median income for their county of residence. According to the author:

This bill would remove a barrier to employment and economic stability for low-income parents by ending occupational license suspensions as an enforcement tool for noncustodial parents whose income is below 70% of the Area Median Income (AMI), while still allowing occupational license suspensions as an enforcement tool for noncustodial parents whose income is above 70% of AMI. AB 2195 will end the overbroad and punitive impact of existing law, and it will reform an ineffective, costly and administratively-burdensome requirement that creates distrust between parents and the child support system, undermining the state's goal of improving the well-being of children and families.

Current law is illogical and counterproductive. If we want families to receive child support payments, we must not hinder the ability of the noncustodial parent to earn a decent wage.

The bill is modeled after SB 1055 (2022, Kamlager), which established the same 70% AMI threshold for driver's license suspensions. See Family Code 17520.5.

The California Child Support Association (CalCSA) opposes the bill on the grounds that exempting those at or below 70 percent of the median income from all license suspension is much too wide a net for the Legislature to cast. In particular, they contend that the proposed change to the law harms children from the lowest-income families; would risk increasing those families' reliance on public assistance; unfairly provides an exemption to low-income families that is not available to higher-income obligors; risks discouraging earnings potential and compliance; and may create increased workloads for licensing and regulatory bodies.

CalCSA additionally states that the threat of license suspension helps bring obligors in through the doors of the LCSA to find a way to come into compliance with their child support order. They state:

CalCSA's standard practice is to work directly with participants to resolve cases in a way that supports continued employment which most often results in timely license releases so there is no suspension. We do not want to create barriers to work. When license suspension authority is used, it is typically to help ensure a non-paying parent is formally seeking employment and, where appropriate, accessing free vocational training and job-placement assistance through their local workforce job center. For those less familiar with the child support program, the primary value of this longstanding authority is that it helps initiate meaningful discussion about realistic options to better support children, taking into account the actual circumstances in a person's life.

Ironically, the sponsors believe that *existing law* is overbroad. They argue that this measure provides a reasonable approach to "end the overbroad and punitive impact of existing law, and it will reform an ineffective, costly and administratively burdensome requirement that creates distrust between parents and the child support system, undermining the state's goal of improving the well-being of children and families."

The sponsors and supporters of the bill point to a study out of Orange County on the efficacy of drivers license suspensions to argue that license suspensions generally are ineffective and punitive. The study found that prior to the implementation of SB 1055, the Orange County Local

Child Support Agency collected only \$376,803 annually from manual license release in 2023, equaling less than one percent of the total amount collected throughout the year. The study also found that after SB 1055 went into effect “the agency experienced no significant impact on collections. In fact, collections increased locally since this change was implemented.” (p. 23) The study concluded by finding that “While license suspension is not the right tool for all customers, it remains in the program as an optional tool for individuals who make more than 70 percent of the county’s median income and meet delinquency requirements. This approach of ‘right tool for the right customer’ is aligned with program objectives.” (*Orange County, California: Data-Driven Reform and Customer-Centered Enforcement*, p. 22-23 (October 2025) National Child Support Engagement Association available at: <https://www.yumpu.com/en/document/read/70793632/october-2025-csq/3>.)

Arguably, if the driving goal of existing law is to encourage obligors to comply with their child support orders, it seems that suspending their business licenses would make it harder for them to do so. However, rather than immediately suspending a license, existing law creates more of a 7-month runway to suspension. It is also vital to note that when an obligor’s license is at risk of being suspended, there is a child and custodial parent who has not received at least one month’s worth of their child support order, likely more. As parents and caretakers well know, children can rack up significant expenses – whether they are health care costs, educational costs, or extracurricular activities. Every parent wants to see their child thrive and succeed, and the goal of a child support order is to help promote that success. It is also true that both the proponents and the opponents want to encourage full payment of child support orders *in an effective manner*. Multiple things can be true simultaneously – license suspensions may be an effective tool for LCSAs to encourage compliance with active support orders *and* in many circumstances, license suspensions may be overly punitive and only make it more difficult for obligors to make ends meet, let alone comply with their support order. Recognizing there may be value in limiting the use of license suspension particularly for low income obligors and balancing that interest against a desire to ensure that low-income children and custodial parents are not unduly impacted, *the author may wish to consider narrowing the scope of this prohibition to apply in circumstances where the obligor is out of compliance with an order to repay arrears owed to the state.*

Additionally, from conversation with the sponsors and based on some of the letters of support, that part of the problem may lie in the implementation of the license suspension program. While the initial license suspension may have a significantly long lead time, once in the program an obligor is no longer entitled to 150-day notice. Instead, it seems that their license may be suspended after a single missed payment, which makes it particularly difficult for low-income earners to “get back on track.” Under existing law, an obligor who had their license suspended one time more than a year ago who suffers a health complication and is unable to work and misses a child support payment as a result may have their license suspended almost immediately. Particularly in cases such as this with overriding circumstances, or where there is no reason to believe that noncompliance is habitual, it seems reasonable to allow more time for the obligor to notify the LCSA of their changed circumstance and seek a modification or other agreement to avoid a license suspension. *Therefore, the author may wish to consider amendments to lengthen the notice time provided for subsequent instances of noncompliance.*

ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT: This bill is sponsored by the Western Center on Law and Poverty. It is supported by a number of low-income advocacy organizations and legal services providers. In support of the bill the sponsors submit:

Current law requires occupational boards, upon receiving a list of names from the Department of Child Support Services, to deny or suspend licenses of any parent who is behind in making child support payments, regardless of any other circumstances. AB 2195 will end the overbroad and punitive impact of existing law, and it will reform an ineffective, costly and administratively burdensome requirement that creates distrust between parents and the child support system, undermining the state's goal of improving the well-being of children and families. Current law is illogical and counterproductive. If we want families to receive child support payments, we must not hinder the ability of the noncustodial parent to earn a decent wage.

This bill is modeled on the successful passage of SB 1055 (Kamlager) in 2022 which limited driver's license suspensions as an enforcement action for unpaid child support to cases where parents' income was above 70% of the Area Median Income (AMI). An Orange County evaluation of SB 1055 found that after implementing SB 1055, Orange County's child support agency experienced no significant impact on collections—in fact, collections increased. Additionally, limiting license suspensions to parents resulted in significant administrative savings for the county agency, equal to two full time case workers. California has other more effective tools to collect child support, such as wage garnishments and tax refund offsets.

Interfering with a parent's ability to earn income by suspending their occupational license, hamper's their ability to pay child support. It is time to end this policy which does not support children and families.

ARGUMENTS IN OPPOSITION: This bill is opposed by the California Child Support Association (CalCSA). They submit:

CalCSA shares the Legislature's interest in ensuring enforcement tools are used appropriately and do not create unnecessary barriers to employment. However, AB 2195 goes too far by broadly exempting an expansive category of licensing consequences for child support noncompliance based solely on an income threshold, undermining a longstanding accountability tool that can be critical to securing support for children. AB 2195 would apply the exclusion to the full scope of "licenses" described in Family Code section 17520, an expansive definition that reaches well beyond driver's licenses.

[...]

CalCSA's concerns with AB 2195 include the following:

1. Selective enforcement that harms children in the lowest-income families. By exempting enforcement consequences for obligors under the 70% county median income threshold, AB 2195 risks reducing the tools available to secure compliance for families who may already receive lower support orders reflecting ability to pay yet still rely on that support for basic necessities.
2. Increased reliance on public assistance and cost shifting to taxpayers. When child support collections fall, more families may turn to safety-net programs (including CalWORKs/TANF and CalFresh/SNAP), shifting costs to the state and federal governments rather than the responsible parent which runs contrary to the child support program's goals of reducing poverty and increasing family self-sufficiency.

3. Potential equal protection and fairness concerns. The bill creates disparate treatment between obligors who exceed the 70% income threshold and would remain subject to license enforcement, and those who fall below that threshold and would be exempt from enforcement. This disparate treatment raises concerns about fairness and consistency in application of the law to all child support obligors.

4. May discourage earnings potential and compliance. The proposal may incentivize some obligors to minimize earnings to preserve professional or occupational licensing privileges, at the expense of their children which runs contrary to California's policy that both parents share responsibility to support their children.

5. Operational and fiscal impacts across state licensing entities. Expanding this exclusion to all licensing boards may create additional administrative complexity and workload across numerous licensing and regulatory bodies; fiscal and operational impacts should be carefully evaluated as the bill moves through the process.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

Western Center on Law & Poverty (sponsor)
Coalition of Welfare Rights Organizations
Communities United for Restorative Youth Justice (CURYJ)
Community Legal Services in East Palo Alto
End Child Poverty California Powered by Grace
Good+foundation
Neighborhood Legal Services of Los Angeles County
Rubicon Programs
Truth and Justice in Child Support Coalition
University of the Pacific McGeorge School of Law Homeless Advocacy Clinic
Young Community Developers

Opposition

Child Support Directors Association of California

Analysis Prepared by: Manuela Boucher-de la Cadena / JUD. / (916) 319-2334