

ASSEMBLY THIRD READING
AB 2195 (Celeste Rodriguez)
As Introduced February 19, 2026
Majority vote

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.

Major Provisions

COMMENTS

When a noncustodial parent fails to comply with an active child support order, that past-due amount is referred to as "arrearage." 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 arrearages, thereby encouraging full payment of support to California's children. Recognizing the potentially outsized impact of suspending the driver's license on a low-income earner, the Legislature enacted SB 1055 (Kamlager) Chapter 830, Statutes of 2022 which prohibited, beginning in January 2025, the suspension of driver's 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 driver's 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 prohibits the suspension of *any* license for obligors who fail to comply with their child support order and 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.

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.

FISCAL COMMENTS

According to the Assembly Appropriations Committee:

- 1) Operation and administrative workload costs to DCSS of an unknown but likely minor amount (General Fund). DCSS describes these costs as currently indeterminate, but notes that updates to the Child Support Enforcement (CSE) system would be required to modify state

license match processes. DCSS anticipates requiring staff training related to financial reviews that would need to be conducted by the caseworkers on license suspension or revocation and outreach in order to inform and educate the public about the changes with occupational and recreational license suspensions or revocations. The operational and administrative workload for DCSS is expected to be absorbed within existing resources.

- 2) Additional possible loss of child support revenue of an unknown but potentially significant amount, to the extent the threat of license suspension increases the likelihood of payment. Based on estimates reported by DCSS in response to prior legislation prohibiting the revocation of driver's licenses for individuals at the same income level as this bill, approximately 84% of people ordered to pay child support have either income below \$40,000 per year, or no income reported at all. As a result, this bill will make the majority of people ordered to pay support ineligible for license suspension under existing law. Therefore, loss of revenue may be minor given that most people ordered to pay support are unable to pay support currently under existing law.
- 3) Existing law, beginning January 1, 2027, prohibits DCSS from seeking the denial, withholding, or suspension of a noncommercial driver's license from low-income child support obligors. This bill would extend the prohibition to all other licenses, and the Department of Motor Vehicles does not anticipate any costs for implementation.

VOTES

ASM JUDICIARY: 9-3-0

YES: Kalra, Lee, Bryan, Connolly, Harabedian, Pacheco, Papan, Stefani, Zbur

NO: Macedo, Dixon, Sanchez

ASM BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONS: 12-6-1

YES: Berman, Addis, Ahrens, Bauer-Kahan, Elhawary, Haney, Hart, Irwin, Jackson, Lowenthal, Nguyen, Pellerin

NO: Johnson, Alanis, Bains, Chen, Hadwick, Macedo

ABS, ABST OR NV: Caloza

ASM APPROPRIATIONS: 11-3-1

YES: Wicks, Aguiar-Curry, Calderon, Caloza, Fong, Mark González, Krell, Pacheco, Pellerin, Sharp-Collins, Solache

NO: Hoover, Dixon, Tangipa

ABS, ABST OR NV: Ta

UPDATED

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