



We urge you to SUPPORT HB 572, *Child support obligations; party's incarceration not deemed voluntary unemployment/underemployment*.

HB 572 includes two necessary amendments, putting Virginia in compliance with 81 FR 93492, and ultimately benefitting children and parents.

HB 572 will reduce the crime rate. If non-custodial parents are under crushing child support obligations, they may drop out of formal employment (if 65% of their wages are being garnished, leaving them essentially nothing to live on), and go back into the black market, such as dealing drugs. When parents are ordered to pay more than they can afford, they may just give up and pay nothing. Baltimore Sun, June 18, 2019 (<https://www.baltimoresun.com/maryland/baltimore-city/bs-md-child-support-abell-foundation-20190618-story.html>). "Child support orders set beyond the ability of noncustodial parents to comply push them out of low-wage jobs, drown them in debt, hound them into the underground economy, and chase them out of their children's lives," wrote former federal child-support chief Vicki Turetsky. Laure Ruth, legal director for the Women's Law Center of Maryland, agreed that changes should be made. "When noncustodial parents have orders they cannot realistically pay," she said, "custodial parents do not receive the money they should be getting and the whole family pays the consequences."

HB 572 will allow access to higher paying jobs. Non-custodial parents released from prison typically have almost nothing, and simply can't pay child support that accrued while in prison. Forcing non-custodial parents to pay child support before their release will result in them losing their driver's license (suspended due to nonpayment) and thus their ability to hold a decent job that will enable them to pay a decent amount of child support going forward -- eliminating their ability to adequately support their children. Non-custodial parents earn less (and thus pay less child support in the long run) when they inevitably lose their driver's license for not being able to pay this unpayable child support that accrued while in prison, because most good jobs are not accessible by transit, as opposed to by car. People who can drive "have access to [30 times as many jobs](#) as low-income people dependent on transit." See Randal O'Toole, *Helping People Reach Jobs*, Cato Institute, Nov. 15, 2017 (<https://www.cato.org/blog/helping-people-reach-jobs>).

Even if non-custodial parents genuinely can't pay their child support during their incarceration, the state of Virginia may still likely waste time and money trying to collect it. That's because noncustodial parents can't challenge a supposedly excessive child-support order without putting up an appeal bond for child support they say they are unable to pay -- which some call a catch-22 situation, because if you are too broke to pay the ordered child support, you are also too broke to afford an appeal bond.

HB 572 will save taxpayer money by not wasting time and money trying to collect uncollectable arrearages from dead broke released inmates. State child support agencies

collect money from middle-class fathers, but largely fail to collect it from poor fathers, despite spending immense time and money incarcerating them, etc.

HB 572 will help promote racial justice. It has been stated by Murray Steinberg, of the former Family Resolution Council in Mechanicsburg, that most non-custodial parents jailed for nonpayment of child support in Virginia are black, as well as a majority of all Virginia prison inmates. Black inmates, unlike white inmates, tend to come from poorer families, where crime rates are much higher. Unlike some white inmates' families, black inmates generally can't count on their relatives to bail them out or pay off their arrearages. It is mostly black people who are going to be crippled by unpayable child support obligations that build up during their incarceration.

By **supporting** HB 572, you will be supporting the rights of parents and children in Virginia. All dependent children have the right to be emotionally, physically, and financially supported by their parents. Once a parent is released from prison, they should have access to gainful employment and get back to the most important job of all, providing for, and raising their children.

Please vote YES.

Regards,

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Family Reunion is a national, non-profit organization that works with lawmakers, existing organizations, and experts dedicated to making much-needed changes to the family court system so the best interests of children can be supported. We focus on positively influencing family laws and policies that often discount one parent and ultimately harm the children.