

The logo for the Georgia Justice Project, featuring the words "GEORGIA JUSTICE PROJECT" in a white, serif font, stacked vertically within a solid olive-green square.

GEORGIA
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

New Legislation Facilitates Easier Reinstatement of Suspended Driver's Licenses

ATLANTA, May 3, 2023 – Recognizing the crucial link between driving and employment, House Bill 926, "The Second Chance Workforce Act," was signed into law, addressing the suspension of driver's licenses for missing a traffic court date. This reform, spearheaded by the Georgia Justice Project (GJP) alongside the Metro Atlanta Chamber, Georgia Chamber of Commerce, Reason Foundation, and other partners, aims to make the reinstatement process more efficient and clearer, reducing unnecessary economic disruption for Georgians.

With **80% of Georgians driving to work**, the ability to drive is often essential for maintaining employment. Unfortunately, each year, **105,000 driver's licenses are suspended in Georgia** not due to unsafe driving, but for missing a court date. The impact is severe, with nearly half of those who lose their license also losing their jobs, as a valid driver's license is a better predictor of sustained employment than a GED.

House Bill 926 builds upon the successes of previous legislation by streamlining the process to regain a license after a suspension for missing traffic court, making it smoother and more transparent. HB 926 ensures that Georgians can regain their driver's licenses the first time they reschedule or appear in court. Additionally, the bill prevents prolonged license suspensions due to financial hardship by expanding fee waivers for low-income drivers. This law will reduce the instances where individuals, out of necessity, may drive on a suspended license—a situation that accounts for **50,000 arrests per year**, consuming approximately 450,000 hours of law enforcement time on non-safety-related arrests.

Quotes from Key Stakeholders:

Rep. Matt Reeves, the bill's author, stated, "In Atlanta and across Georgia, losing your driver's license means jeopardizing your job. The Second Chance Workforce Act ensures that Georgians can maintain their livelihood and support their families."

Doug Ammar, Executive Director of the Georgia Justice Project, remarked, "A valid driver's license often represents stability for our clients, making the difference between securing and retaining employment, attending medical appointments, and supporting family members. We are immensely grateful to Rep. Matt Reeves for spearheading this bill, which is vital for eliminating barriers for Georgians eager to return to work."

Sky Park of the Metro Atlanta Chamber commented, "We were proud to collaborate with the Georgia Justice Project in advocating for House Bill 926. By eliminating unnecessary barriers to driver's license access, this legislation empowers individuals to participate fully in our economy, securing employment opportunities and contributing significantly to our communities."

Pedro Cherry, Chair, Georgia Chamber of Commerce, stated, “The Second Chance Workforce Act will improve the lives of Georgians, affording them the opportunity to continue providing for their families and removing barriers to help move our state’s economy forward. The Georgia Chamber stands with the Georgia Justice Project and applauds the General Assembly and Governor Kemp for their commitment to the state’s workforce and help keep Georgia the number one place to do business.”

This legislation represents a significant advancement in reducing barriers to employment and supporting the economic stability of Georgia families.

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About GJP:

For 35 years, Georgia Justice Project (GJP) has served Georgians impacted by the criminal legal system. GJP approaches social change in three ways: through legal and social services - including holistic criminal defense, early termination of probation, criminal record clearing, and other reentry services; by advocating for a better Georgia, resulting in 23 changes to Georgia law so far; and by educating communities statewide on criminal justice and reentry issues. These approaches advance GJP’s goals to lower the number of Georgians under correctional control and reduce barriers to reentry.

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