

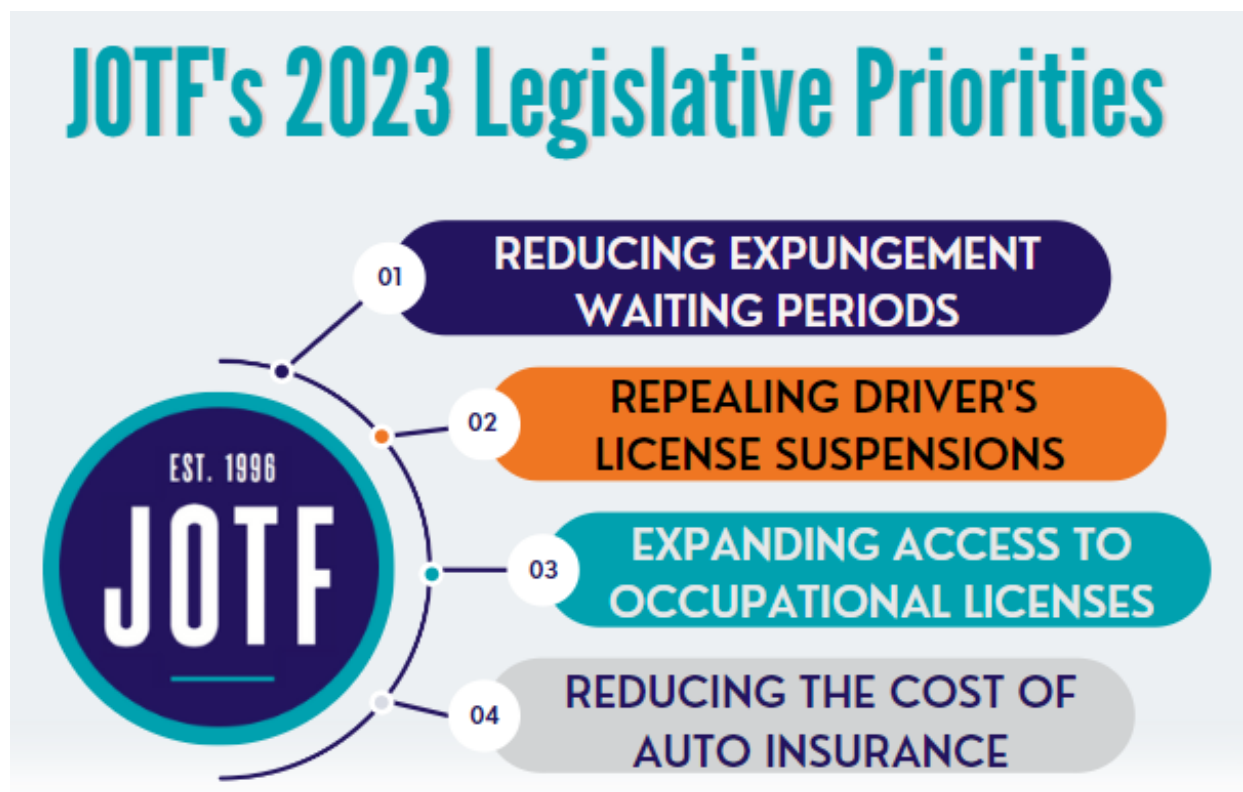
# JOTF JOB OPPORTUNITIES TASK FORCE

*Advocating better skills, jobs, and incomes*

## 2023 PUBLIC POLICY AGENDA

The Job Opportunities Task Force (JOTF) advocates for legislative and budget proposals to improve employment opportunities for Maryland's low-skill, low-income workers and families. Our advocacy work stems from a recognition that a healthy Maryland economy requires public policies that meet the workforce needs of employers and promote fair and equitable access to employment opportunities for low-income Marylanders.

JOTF supports a broad agenda of legislation that eliminates educational and employment barriers for low-wage workers, from rent stabilization to paid family and medical leave. Our 2023 legislative priorities were developed with feedback from workforce-trainees in our BetterU training program and include: reducing expungement waiting periods, repealing driver's license suspensions, expanding access to occupational licensing, and reducing the cost of auto insurance.



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## 2023 Legislative Priorities

### Reducing Expungement Waiting Periods

#### **Maryland REDEEM Act of 2023 - Reducing Expungement Waiting Periods**

A criminal record can easily be both the cause and consequence of poverty. The appearance of a criminal record in a routine background check can, and many times will, block access to employment, education, housing, and occupational licensing- all of which are necessary to advance in Maryland. The proposed legislation will allow nonviolent misdemeanor and felony convictions to be eligible for expungement for three (3) and five (5) years, respectively, after completing any mandatory supervision, including parole and probation. [See JOTF's Fact Sheet.](#)

#### **Automatic & Immediate Expungement: Nonconvictions (NEW):**

In Maryland, individuals receive a visible criminal record regardless of if they were convicted of a crime. Acquittals, dismissals, and nolle prosequis (i.e. non-convictions) are automatically expunged after the statute of limitations (3 years), thanks to [JOTF's 2021 reforms](#). However, these non-convictions remain visible to employers, landlords, property managers, licensing boards, and colleges until the three-year window has closed and can limit opportunities for the individual. JOTF seeks to shield non-convictions from public view for three years until they are automatically expunged. [See JOTF's Fact Sheet.](#)

#### **"Good Cause" Expungement Establishment (NEW):**

Current law states that courts may grant a petition for expungement at any time on a [showing of good cause](#) if the charges resulted in a non-conviction, probation before judgment, stet, or if the charge was vacated. This session, JOTF seeks to expand the court's good cause expungement power to misdemeanors or felonies that they deem worthy. [See JOTF's Fact Sheet.](#)

### Repealing Driver's License Suspensions

#### **Child Support - Repeal License Suspensions for Lower-Income Obligor**

Mobility is key in Maryland's regional economy. Nearly half of Marylanders travel outside of their county for employment and only 9% of jobs in the Baltimore region can be reached within one-hour, one-way by public transit. A vehicle and a valid driver's license are thus necessary to obtain and sustain employment. When an individual misses two months of child support payments, their driver's license will be suspended regardless of their ability to pay. This directly jeopardizes access to employment for lower-income workers and complicates already tense relationships with families. The proposed legislation will eliminate driver's license suspensions as a penalty for child support obligors making less than 300% of the federal poverty line (~\$41,000). [See JOTF's Fact Sheet.](#)

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## 2023 Legislative Priorities

### Expanding Access to Occupational Licenses

#### Healthcare Occupational Licensing- Immigrant Restrictions

As of 2022, Maryland hospitals face the most critical staffing shortage in recent history, with one in every four nurse positions vacant. High staff turnover, shifting care delivery models, and an insufficient nursing pipeline is reaching an unsustainable point that stretches bedside care incredibly thin and further strains the workforce across the care continuum. Maryland contains a robust immigrant population that is qualified to fill these shortages but is denied licenses because they only have an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN), not a Social Security Number (SSN). JOTF is pursuing legislation to allow occupational licensing boards to use either the ITIN or SSN when securing a professional license. [See JOTF's Fact Sheet.](#)

### Reducing the Cost of Auto Insurance

#### Auto Insurance Affordability – Subsidies for Baltimore Workforce Graduates

Maryland law allows private auto insurers to utilize non-driving related factors, including credit scores, education level, occupation, and zip code to set insurance premiums. These factors result in disproportionately high premiums for low-income workers of color who simply can't afford it. The Consumer Federation of America found that good drivers with low credit scores or in predominantly African American zip codes are charged nearly double what their counterparts are, controlling for all other factors, including driving record. This session, JOTF will support the creation of a three-year pilot program to distribute auto insurance subsidies to drivers who graduate from vocational training programs in Baltimore City. [See JOTF's Fact Sheet.](#)

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## **Additional 2023 Legislation**

### Workgroup to Study the Impact of Criminal Justice-Related Fines and Fees:

Maryland, like most states, funds a large part of its criminal justice system through mandated fines and fees for service, including district and circuit court costs, expungement and fingerprinting fees, parole and probation, work release, phone calls, room and board, electronic monitoring, drug and alcohol testing, late fees, interest charges and much more. The financial impact these fees have had on our constituents has yet to be fully studied in Maryland. To address the “jail tax” on Marylanders, JOTF is seeking to create a workgroup that will study the impact of fines and fees on lower-income Marylanders by race, class, gender and jurisdiction with the end goal of crafting a transparent report for the public. [See JOTF’s Fact Sheet.](#)

### Defending Paid Family & Medical Leave - Time2Care Act

The Time to Care Coalition passed 12 weeks of Paid Family, and Medical Leave last year after a 4-year fight. Marylanders will have official access to paid family leave in 2025. This session, JOTF’s goal is to defend the bill from alterations by opposition that may seek to reduce the impact of the bill for workers, as well as to ensure equitable implementation.

### The Transit Equity Act

This bill makes equity a primary goal for the Maryland Department of Transportation. The law requires the Department to analyze the impact of any proposed service change on disparities related to race, disability, and other axes of exclusion. If an equity analysis reveals negative disparate impacts, the Act requires the Department to pursue a fairer alternative. This new law could reverse a long history of transit discrimination in Maryland.

### Housing Legislation

JOTF is working at the local and state level on legislation that makes housing more affordable for workers, and that addresses housing equity issues, including: statewide legislation to stop illegally operating landlords from using eviction court, county-level efforts to stabilize rent, and Baltimore City Inclusionary Housing legislation.