

April 7, 2020

Commissioner Torre Jessup  
NC Division of Motor Vehicles  
1501 Mail Service Center  
Raleigh, North Carolina 27699  
[tjessup1@ncdot.gov](mailto:tjessup1@ncdot.gov)

*Via US Mail & Email*

Dear Commissioner Jessup:

We are writing to you as members of the North Carolina Fines and Fees Coalition, which has been working for years to lessen the crushing burden placed upon the poorest of our citizens by the ever-increasing fines, fees and penalties imposed by the courts of North Carolina in criminal and traffic cases. Not surprisingly, the impact of the current coronavirus pandemic is falling most heavily on the same people who are most harmed by the excessive imposition of fines, fees and penalties -- those who are living paycheck-to-paycheck, who are so often entangled in the criminal legal system, and who are disproportionately from communities of color.

Starting with the Governor, North Carolina leaders at the state, county and municipal levels have acted quickly and decisively to meet this ongoing crisis by taking steps to ameliorate the potentially disastrous impact of the ongoing pandemic. As Commissioner of the Department of Motor Vehicles, you are in a unique position to take steps that will increase public safety and health, ensure that fines and fees are not a barrier to people's basic needs throughout this emergency, and promote the resiliency of our communities.

Amidst the COVID-19 Pandemic, working people are losing their jobs because most low-paying jobs cannot be done remotely. Families are unable to pay their rent, buy food, or afford medical care — and are not able to bear the additional burden of their traffic debt or DMV fees. Therefore, these individuals are more at risk of suffering consequences of not paying, such as suspension of their driver's license. In addition, the social distancing that is so essential to curb the spread of COVID-19 is not possible for those whose licenses are suspended under NC Gen. Stat. 20-24.1, and often their families. These suspensions compel people to use public transportation, secure paid rides, or secure rides from others in order to travel to meet basic needs and secure medical testing and treatment.

In light of this ongoing unprecedented emergency, we therefore ask you, as head of the NC Division of Motor Vehicles, to work with the Governor to take immediate action to reduce the harm that the coronavirus and resulting economic catastrophe will impose upon the poorest and most vulnerable North



Carolina residents. In particular, we ask that the NC DMV take the following immediate action:

1. **Reinstate drivers' licenses that are suspended under NC Gen. Stat. 20-24.1;**
2. **Impose a moratorium on all driver's license revocation proceedings under NC Gen. Stat. 20-24.1;**
3. **Waive the \$65 license restoration fee and \$50 service fee for reinstatement;**
4. **Waive \$200 NC DMV hearing fees**

Experts expect the COVID-19 pandemic will last for 18 months.<sup>1</sup> We therefore ask that the proposed actions remain in effect **for a reasonable period of time, giving strong consideration to the expert reports warning that the pandemic itself will last until at least September 2021.** Doing so will provide much-needed aid to families struggling to weather the financial impact of this pandemic and its aftermath.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

**THE NORTH CAROLINA FINES AND FEES COALITION**

**Daryl Atkinson**

Co-Director  
Forward Justice

**Daniel Bowes**

Director  
NC Justice Center, Fair Chance Project

**Chantal Stevens**

Interim Executive Director  
ACLU of North Carolina

**Don Cavellini**

Co-Chair  
Coalition Against Racism

**Kristen Powers**

Interim Executive Director  
Benevolence Farm

**James E. Williams, Jr.**

Attorney

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<sup>1</sup> PANCAP ADAPTED U.S. GOV'T COVID-19 RESPONSE PLAN 4 (2020)  
<https://int.nyt.com/data/documenthelper/6819-covid-19-response-plan/d367f758bec47cad361f/optimized/full.pdf#page=1>