Driver’s License Suspension and Self-Sufficiency
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Background
Criminal debt from low-level traffic infractions is a large-scale issue in NC

- **1 in 12** NC residents currently has unpaid criminal court debt
- **436,000+** NC drivers’ licenses have been revoked for non-payment of fines as of 2017
- **1 in 7** Durham County residents has had active suspensions from Failure To Comply (FTC) or Appear (FTA) since 1980

License suspensions from FTCs disproportionately affect low-income communities of color

- **Racial Inequity:** In NC, Black people are nearly **2x** more likely than White people to have a license suspension
- In Durham County, Black people made up approximately **70%** of FTCs despite comprising only **37%** of the total population
- **Economic Inequity:** In NC, **55%** of license suspensions were from people with incomes in the bottom third of the state

License suspensions from FTCs disproportionately affect low-income communities of color

- **Loss of job, housing, or schooling**
- **Inability to pay fines and fees**
- **Commute dilemma; absences or suspended driving**
- **Restricted mobility and independence**
- **Suspension or revocation; loss of license**
- **Inability to pay fines and fees**

Traffic stop, fines administered

**Durham Expunction and Restoration (DEAR) Program**

**Expunction**
- Filed petitions to clear or remove old, unresolved charges from non-traffic cases

**Restoration**
- Supported the reinstatement of suspended or revoked driver’s licenses

**By The Numbers**
- **$2,500,000** in fines and fees waived
- **51,000** traffic charges dismissed
- **6,500** unpaid traffic tickets remitted
- **600** expunction petitions filed

**Interview Content**
- Program Creation
- Organizational Structure
- Program Evaluation
- Work Experience

**Methods:** Qualitative Interviews

**Interviewees**
- 9 DEAR Professionals
- 40 Program Participants

**Findings**

1. Excessive Punishments and Inequitable Outcomes
- State Policy: Eliminate license suspension/revocation due to failure to pay or appear in court

2. Confusion, Poor Communication, and Administrative Barriers
- County Policy: Create an online portal informing participants of their progress with fines, expungement, or restoration

3. Small Number of Restored Licenses
- County Policy: Increase funding and staffing for DEAR. Establish a fund for DMV-related fees

4. Legal Issues Outside of Durham Present a Barrier to Restoration
- State Policy: Institute statewide expunction and restoration programs