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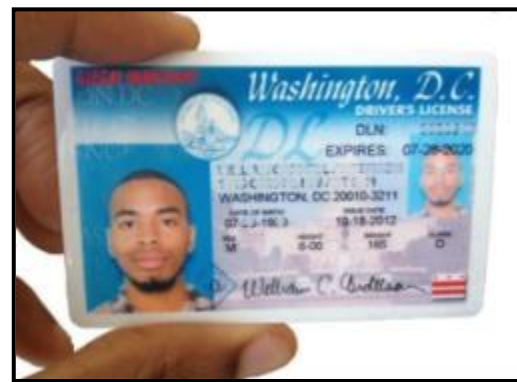
## Helping Residents with the Most Basic Need: Getting an ID

By Ed Lazere

Anyone who has ever lost their ID in a remote place knows how hard it can be to prove who you are – and how stressful and challenging it can be to do *anything* without an ID. That's why it is important that the District is considering steps to make it easier for residents to get an ID, including a bill that would waive the fee for low-income residents to get key ID documents.

Most of us cannot function for long without a proper government-issued ID; we pull out our driver's license or similar IDs all the time. Having an ID is critical to getting a job, getting on an airplane, or even getting into many office buildings. For low-income families, appropriate ID is important to applying for public benefits.

That's why it's important for the District to make it easy for residents to get an ID or replace a lost one, including making it affordable. The poorest fifth of DC households have average income of under \$10,000, according to a recent DCFPI [report](#). And our [research](#) also shows that the typical low-income resident now spends two-thirds of their income for rent and utilities.



**Needed for Daily Life: An ID**

This means that many DC households struggle to meet even their most basic needs each month. An expense that may seem modest to many of us – such as paying \$47 for a driver's license – can be prohibitive to someone who routinely has too little to pay their rent or stock their refrigerator.

The Improving Access to Identity Documents Act would allow residents with incomes below 200 percent of poverty – or about \$40,000 for a family of three - to get DC birth certificates, driver's licenses, or non-driver's ID cards – free of charge.

This bill reflects a notion that DC's fees should be adjusted based on a household's ability to pay. It represents an important opening for broader efforts that should be considered to modify other fees and fines in the District based on income.

We hope that the Improving Access to Identity Documents Act gets approved and funded soon, so that DC residents can start getting the IDs they need to get through daily life.