

Honorable Thomas E. Brinkman, Jr.
Chair, House Insurance Committee
77 S. High St.
Columbus, OH 43215

10/30/2017

Chair Brinkman, Vice Chair Henne, Ranking Member Bocchieri and members of the House Insurance Committee,

I am writing to you in support of HB 336/the Reinstatement Fee Amnesty Initiative. I have been a social worker for over 40 years now and taught Social Welfare Policy at the college level for 10 of those years. In the policy courses, we talked about rationales for programs and laws and how they should make sense. Making sense meaning weighing the pros and cons and making sure that it is worth it – that the pros outweigh the cons. I am not sure we have done that when we make it so hard for someone to get their license back.

As a case manager at Lorain/Medina Community Based Correctional Facility, I have worked with many residents that have struggled for a long time trying to get their license back due to extreme costs. What makes it hard is – how do I pay off court costs and fines and license fines when I cannot get to work because I do not have a license. What I hear from a lot of people in the public is that they can probably find a ride if they want to go get cigarettes, alcohol etc. That may be true, but it is different to find a ride from some certain types of people for a quick shopping trip than to find a ride to work and back 5 days a week. I have had many guys being behind on paying child support so their license is taken. Ok, you want me to pay child support but I cannot get a job since I cannot get to work. Many of these guys do not have the support needed to get through this. Yes, they brought problems on themselves and they have spent money inappropriately. But if I am now trying to change and turn my life around and it just seems impossible, the thinking is

I might as well give up and go back to the criminal lifestyle.

We need to provide more help and support to them. We pay a lot of money to punish them (put them in prison – costing about 50,000 per year per prisoner) but we do not spend money on things that might turn their lives into something more positive. Just seeing the guys in here who now go to college because we pay for college while they are in here (just 2 classes but it is something) is a good thing and speaks to how the positive and the help can advance people much more than the negative and the punishers.

With little to no bus transportation and so many people without much positive support, we have to do whatever we can to encourage people to do the right thing – and one of those things is do legal work. I am pretty sure we could ultimately see more pros than cons from this, even if there are some bad apples. I see that any issues with drugs or alcohol rules out helping that person. I would ask you to reconsider that. When we pile up negative consequences on them and offer little to no help, we are not going to encourage them to turn their lives around. We are only piling on the negative and beating them up more and then they just give up and keep going on the illegal lifestyle.

I am sorry I could not be there in person to answer questions or provide more information. If you have questions of me, please do not hesitate to contact me.

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