



State Representative Jim Butler

41st House District

House Bill 260 – Sponsor Testimony before the House Transportation & Public Safety Committee; Wednesday, September 13th, 2017.

Chairman Green, Vice Chair Greenspan, Ranking Member Sheehy, and Members of the House Transportation and Public Safety Committee, thank you for this opportunity to offer sponsor testimony for House Bill 260 along with my joint sponsor, Representative Emilia Sykes.

This is a very straightforward piece of legislation, the intent of which is to discontinue the unfair practice of suspending a person's license, and then not granting them driving privileges when the offense they committed had nothing to do with driving or with using a vehicle for criminal reasons. For example, under current law, a driver can have his or her license suspended, without privileges to drive to work or school, for an offense like failing to pay child support or failing to pay a municipal fine in a timely manner. The typical reason most people fail to pay in those situations is they are already in desperate economic circumstances. Is it really fair suspend their driver's licenses without granting them certain driving privileges, making it that much more difficult to get to work, which will allow them to earn the income they so badly need? Fully taking away someone's ability to drive because they committed an offense which has nothing to do with their ability to operate a vehicle is too often detrimental and counterproductive.

Our criminal justice system needs to stop using a total license suspension as an arbitrary punishment. It is unjust to hinder someone's the ability to get to work, and to interfere with their ability to live up to personal obligations. Our system should only fully suspend or revoke a person's driver's license if they are truly a danger behind the wheel, or if they are using vehicles for criminal purposes. Full suspensions of licenses without granting limited privileges can significantly hinder peoples' ability to provide for their families. House Bill 260 will still allow for the appropriate punishment of those who deserve it, but will also take a step toward making a common procedure within our legal system significantly more fair and just through the automatic granting of privileges in the types of situations I mentioned.

Chairman Green, thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony. I am happy to answer the committee's questions at this time, or to yield while Rep. Sykes offers her testimony. Thank you.