

Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony regarding Senate Bill 68.

I am the Executive Director of Court Community Service, the non-profit agency that administers the placement of individuals ordered to perform community work service by Cleveland Municipal, Cuyahoga County Common Pleas, and other municipal courts in the Greater Cleveland area. We have been providing this service to area courts since 1985.

Our agency receives an average of 8,000 referrals per year from partnering courts. In a typical year individuals complete more than 250,000 hours of community work service at hundreds of local charitable and governmental agencies including hunger centers, food banks, local development corporations, and churches. In addition, many are placed on supervised work crews that clean public roads and vacant lots, mow lawns and shovel snow for seniors, remove graffiti, and work in community gardens.

Many individuals are referred to our program to “work off” fines and court fees because they have no means to pay. Often times our staff is asked “Can I work off my BMV fees? I can’t afford the BMV fees but I want to do the right thing. I want to get a valid license.” With more than half of our referrals being unemployed this is a frequent question we hear in our office.

Here are just a few responses our office has received from clients when asked if the option of performing community work service as an alternative to paying BMV fees would be helpful in resolving their court cases, and in turn, driving legally with a valid driver’s license.

“Community service would be a great option to pay fees. Some people can’t afford to pay but need their license.”

“Driving is very important to those seeking employment and not everyone has the money to pay fees.”

“I’m on social security and paying a fee is difficult.”

By providing an option to perform community work service to “work-off” BMV fees, individuals can have a path to driving legally. Offenders would be required to demonstrate responsible behavior and complete a defined number of community work service hours that, in turn, provides assistance to charitable agencies or helps to improve their community through work on a supervised crew. It is a “win-win” for the courts and our communities. Thank you.

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