

Louis W. Blessing, III

State Representative
29th House District



COMMITTEES:

Ways and Means, *Vice Chair*
Education
General Government and Agency Review
Insurance and Financial Institutions
Finance Subcommittee on Primary &
Secondary Education

HB 158 Sponsor Testimony November 6, 2019

Chairman Manning, Vice Chair Brenner, Ranking Member Maharath, and Members of the Senate Local Government, Public Safety and Veterans Affairs Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to present sponsor testimony on House Bill 158.

The purpose of HB 158 is to relieve some financial burden on low-income drivers who are trying to provide for themselves and their families. Imagine a driver who already cannot afford basic car insurance is pulled over and has driving privileges revoked due to the lack of insurance. Now, on top of now paying for an insurance plan, this person must pay off the court fees in order to drive legally again. This person who already struggles financially must decide if driving to work is worth the risk of being pulled over again and having even harsher legal and financial consequences.

Intending to address this issue, the bill does two things:

First, it explicitly allows courts to grant limited driving privileges to a first offender driver whose license is suspended because of failure to maintain proof of financial responsibility, more commonly referred to as car insurance. Current law allows courts to grant these privileges for the same lack of insurance issue, but only when it is the driver's second or more offense.

Second, it waives the filing fee to petition for these driving privileges if the person applies to be qualified as an indigent litigant. Some courts throughout the state do have a process to grant limited driving privileges, however the application costs just as much, if not more, money as the initial fee, thus making the process pointless for the applicant.

The goal of this legislation is to keep drivers safe, without forcing low-income individuals to collect a mountain of fees in the process. My hope with this bill is to help people support themselves and avoid incurring additional financial burden. I believe HB 158 encourages people to make responsible and safe choices.

Chairman Manning and Members of the Committee, thank you for your consideration of HB 158. I am happy to answer any questions from the committee.