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#### Testimony HB 158

Mr. Chairman, Committee members, thank you for taking time on this important issue. My name is Charles Tassell, I am a Deer Park City Council Member, Director of Government Affairs for the Greater Cincinnati Northern Kentucky Apartment Association and a local real estate entrepreneur.

When there are obstacles, especially institutional obstacles, which develop as a byproduct of progress, it is incumbent upon each of us to address them. Mr. Chairman I have included my initial guest editorial in the Cincinnati Enquirer, and as it sums up the problem and offers several solutions, I will not belabor the point today. I would like to thank Senator Blessing and his staff for their work on HB 158. Mr. Blessing immediately recognized that steps could be taken through this legislature and began working on it at once. Additionally, I'd like to recognize Tom Zawistowski of the Ohio Tea Party and Joe Mallory of the Cincinnati NAACP – both of whom have been very supportive of this kind of fix.

In lieu of going through the details of the bill, I'd like to tell you a short story, that I hope will put a face on the impact of this bill.

We often reference the American Dream, and yet find that only 1 in 10 Americans are able to move from poverty to a middle income life-style. We all know it takes work, but just how much, is often overlooked.

In 2011 my business partner and I bought a small apartment building in the Avondale Community of Cincinnati. At that time we were introduced to the Property Manager and on-site Maintenance Man – Sam Jefferies. Sam began to work for us in the same role, at first as a contractor and then as an employee. In the beginning we asked Sam about working at some other small properties, and Sam deferred. Eventually, he shared with us that he had a suspended Drivers license. We talked to him about getting it resolved and he shared that getting things corrected would be both expensive – over \$3,000 at the time, and entail a lot of back and forth with the Courts, and the Bureau of Motor Vehicles. A department not known for its timely customer service.

Sam is an US Army Veteran, and therefore accustomed to dealing with the bureaucratic processes. Over the next 18 months we worked with Sam in order to pay down the bill to the Court, and reinstate his license. With a growing support network Sam was able to overcome the obstacle that was created because of a lack of funds to pay his basic insurance payment, and the ensuing entanglements with the law. Sam is one of the few.

In my role at the Apartment Association, I have since heard from several members who have had employees and contractors in similar situations – some of those have resulted in extended jail sentences because the judges lack the ability to give work driving privileges, or even waive fees due to indigence. I spoke with several judges including Judge Josh Berkowitz of the Hamilton County Municipal Court and he helped develop some of the solutions in the editorial.

I am not here to support driving without insurance, however, when a person is working paycheck to paycheck and trying to become valid, we should support that.

This bill seeks to solve some of the problems encountered on the ladder to success and I commend this legislature on this bill and ask that you move it forward in a timely fashion, maybe not for Sam this time, but for others who have struggled in similar circumstances.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the time of this committee.