



Office of the Ohio Public Defender

Timothy Young, State Public Defender

Testimony in Support of HB158 Filing Fee – Limited Driving Privileges Sponsor Senator Blessing

Chair 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 provide written proponent testimony on behalf of the Office of the Ohio Public Defender (OPD) in support of House Bill 158 (HB158). I am Niki Clum, the legislative liaison for the OPD.

As this committee knows, HB158 allows individuals to receive limited driving privileges while the individual is paying the reinstatement fee for a suspension resulting from a failure to have motor vehicle insurance. The bill also allows the court to waive the filing fee for limited driving privileges when the individual is indigent.

As a former misdemeanor prosecutor, I saw firsthand the extensive negative consequences of suspending an individual's license when that individual cannot get driving privileges. Those individuals fall into, what one judge called, the "BMV cycle of death." First, an individual determines that they cannot afford motor vehicle insurance, so they drive without insurance. The individual gets caught, and their license is suspended for driving without proof of financial responsibility. After an individual's license is suspended, they have no ability to get to their job or take their children to school or daycare. The individual is left with an impossible choice, lose their job and make their financial situation worse – or drive without a license. Many Ohioans choose to keep driving in order to provide for their families and meet their basic needs.

If an individual is caught driving without a license, the court can impose fines and an additional license suspension. Of course, each of those license suspensions comes with its own reinstatement fees. The fines and additional BMV reinstatement fees cause the individual to experience further financial hardship. And the cycle continues.

HB158 will help Ohioans avoid the “BMV cycle of death” by allowing them to receive limited driving privileges for a first Driving Without Proof of Financial Responsibility Suspension. These individuals will no longer have to decide between losing their employment or driving without a license.

Every person in Ohio benefits when all Ohioans drive legally, are able to keep their employment, and are able to care for their families. Thank you for the opportunity to provide written proponent testimony regarding HB158.

