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**Committees:**

Judiciary – Ranking Member  
Local Government, Public Safety,  
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Education  
Rules and Reference  
Ways and Means  
Finance Subcommittee on Higher Education

**Cecil Thomas**  
State Senator  
9th District

**Local Government, Public Safety, Veterans Affairs Committee**  
**SB 92: Failure to Display Front License Plate--Secondary Offense Testimony**  
**March 28, 2017**

Chairman Uecker, Vice Chair Wilson, and members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on SB 92. As a former City of Cincinnati police officer of 27 years, spending the bulk of those years in patrol and investigation, I can offer firsthand experience from a policing perspective regarding the subject matter.

I agree with the premise that two plates offer a higher possibility of identification relative to the commission of a criminal or traffic offense. However, enforcement of the single license plate violation is seldom, if ever, enforced. I can't recall ever in my 27 year career issuing a citation for displaying just one plate. Most of my law enforcement colleagues would agree that it's very limited in its enforcement.

There is an unwritten rule in policing that the traffic stop is the most effective tool in fostering good community-police relations. It is this type of citizen-police contact that presents the officer with an opportunity to showcase his or her department by displaying courtesy, respect, and professionalism.

Unfortunately, some officers are selective in their enforcement of the license plate requirement. Some engage in profiling by using such a minor equipment violations as a pretext for other investigatory stops in violation of the search and seizure rules of the U.S. Constitution.

The pretext stop is the crux of the problem. It has cost cities millions of dollars in lawsuits. It is these types of stops that erode good community/police relations, foster tension and distrust, and result in unnecessary citizen's complaints.

As of February 2017, 19 states have eliminated the front license plate requirement in its entirety, 6 are looking at the issue now, and 2 have eliminated it if the vehicle was not originally equipped with a front bracket.

I request that the committee favorably recommend making the one license plate requirement a secondary offense, thereby meeting the needs of law enforcement, and also recognizing that the front plate violation as a primary stop is rarely enforced, but can be selectively enforced.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this issue. I am happy to answer any questions.