

Testimony in Support of HB 285
Lori M. Tyack, Clerk
Franklin County Municipal Court
Senate Local Government, Public Safety, and Veterans Affairs Committee
January 21, 2020

Chair Manning, Vice Chair Brenner, Ranking Member Maharath and members of the Senate Local Government, Public Safety and Veterans Affairs Committee, my name is Lori Tyack and I am the Clerk of Court for the Franklin County Municipal Court. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 285.

Franklin County Municipal Court is the largest municipal court in Ohio based on the volume of cases filed annually. The majority of our cases are traffic-related, and countless numbers of defendants receive driver's license suspensions as a result of a conviction. Ohio Drivers with license suspensions often need assistance to navigate the complex system of reinstatement.

Having a valid driver's license is important if you want to get a job, purchase tobacco or alcohol, go to the casino, a dance club, travel by airplane and the ultimate, apply for a marriage license. Based on 2017 statistics from the Ohio Bureau of Motor Vehicles, more than 3.3 million suspensions were issued in Ohio and 370,000 in Franklin County alone. According to a recent survey from the American Association of Motor Vehicles, most situations causing license suspensions do not even involve moving violations.

Unfortunately, many individuals have more than one suspension on their license. This negatively impacts their ability to perform daily tasks, such as driving their children to school, driving to/from a job, doctor visits, or even making a trip to the grocery store.

In April and in December, 2019, The Franklin County Municipal Court Clerk's Office (FCMC Clerk) and 22 City, County, State and five privately-owned companies organized a three-day Workshop to make it easier for participants to get their licenses back. More than 100 attorney volunteers provided legal advice and helped participants identify the steps necessary for license reinstatement. Judges in Municipal and Domestic Relations Court were available to meet with participants. Participants received favorable consideration to resolve their court cases and have their suspensions set aside. Franklin County Child Support Services were on site to assist with payment plans. Jobs and Family Services offered financial assistance to qualifying participants, some of which was applied toward payment of reinstatement fees, and the Veterans Administration participated providing information and financial assistance to veterans.

I personally had an opportunity to assist a gentlemen who had three license suspensions on his driver's license from three separate courts, dating back to 1985. He was a former marine who was now raising his grandson. He told me that he attended our workshop because he wanted to be a good role model for his grandson. The three suspensions arose out of cases filed against him during a time he was having marital problems.

Unfortunately, none of the cases were filed in my court, so my court did not have jurisdiction. One of the legal aid attorneys approached me with the dilemma, because she did not know how to help him. After reviewing his Driver's Abstract, I realized that there were phone numbers listed beside each case number and court listed. So I sat down with him and began calling the clerk's offices. I explained our program to the clerks

and that I had a gentlemen with an old case in their court. The first court dismissed the case because it was so old and emailed the release of the suspension to me. The second court advised that if he showed up for court, the judge would work with him to resolve the case and release the suspension. I asked if they had an advocate for veterans, and they provided the name and phone number for the advocate. The third court provided the amount owed and advised us that the gentlemen could make the payment online and the suspension would be released.

This gentlemen was so humble. He could not believe that together we had achieve what he had not in more than 30 years. This was just one of the many success stories I heard during our workshops.

Did we have issues and concerns during the workshops? Yes. Keep in mind, no two cases were alike. Since my staff deals with driver's license issues every day, they had a handle on most scenarios before they were presented. But, it was difficult to adequately prepare the attorneys and volunteers who assisted participants. We made adjustments on the fly. We learned from one another and developed what I hope will be long-lasting relationships with members of other agencies. I would like to publicly thank all the agencies that participated in our workshops.

Most of all, we made the difference in the lives of several hundred people. We gave them hope that they could work out a solution and get their lives back on track.

I want to thank the House and the Senate for providing this opportunity to all Ohioans in 2019. And I encourage you to pass HB285 so that we can continue to assist those persons with qualifying license suspensions in getting their lives back on track. Thank you!

2019 Driver's License Reinstatement Workshop Statistics

Partners

Franklin County Municipal Court
 Ohio State Bar Association
 Ohio Bureau of Motor Vehicles
 Franklin County Child Support Enforcement
 Franklin County Municipal Court Self Help Resource Center
 Affordable Insurance Agency of Ohio
 Franklin County Justice Policy & Programs
 Franklin County Sheriff's Office
 G.O.R.E.E. Insurance Company
 Ohio Attorney General's Office
 Franklin County Domestic Relations Court

Franklin County Municipal Court Clerk
 Ohio Legal Assistance Foundation
 Franklin County Job & Family Services
 City of Columbus, Prosecuting Attorney
 Franklin County Public Defenders
 Chalmers P. Wylie VA Ambulatory Care Center
 Legal Aid Society
 Central Ohio Assn. of Mayor's Court Clerks
 SOLID Insurance Company
 TWP Driving Academy
 Columbus Division of Police

Costs/Fines Dismissed by Franklin County Municipal Court:	\$118,294+
Filing Fees Waived by Franklin County Municipal Court:	\$21,156
Waved or Reduced by BMV:	<u>373,359+</u>
Total Saved by Participants:	\$504,322+

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- Pre-Registered 731 (182 were called prior to event) (459 did not attend); Attended: 279
 - Walk-Ins (Files started with number 1,000, last number issued 1,799): 1,209
 - **Total Assisted by Clerk's Office:** **1,488**

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- **Ohio Bureau of Motor Vehicles Assisted:** **947+**
 - **Total Amount Waived:** **\$373,359+**
 - Reductions Approved: 138+
 - Cases Reduced (Some defendants had more than one case) 441+
 - Amount Waived: \$109,865+
 - Waivers Approved: 197
 - Cases Waived (Some defendants had more than one case) 712
 - Amount Waived: \$263,494+

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- **Costs/Fines Dismissed by Franklin County Municipal Court:** **\$118,294+**
 - Clerk's Office (CSG) Updated FCMC Case Files (Code BMVDL19): 496
 - Initiated New Civil files for driving privileges
 - Court waived driving privileges fees (\$123 ea.; Participants saved \$21,156) 172
 - **Case Files Updated/Initiated by Clerk's Office Staff:** **668**

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- **Mayor's Court Clerks assisted:** **72**
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Additional Statistics:

- FCMC Probation Department provided record checks (LEADS) 1,759
- Self-Identified as having Military Service: 53
- Requested Interpreter: 6