

Ohio Statehouse
1 Capitol Square
Columbus, OH 43215

December 11, 2024

Written Proponent Testimony – SB 37

Chair Ghanbari, Vice Chair Plummer, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of Senate Bill 37. I also want to thank Senators Blessing and Ingram for introducing this important legislation to refine the use of driver's license suspension in Ohio.

I am presenting written testimony on behalf of Prison Fellowship, the nation's largest Christian nonprofit equipping the Church to serve currently and formerly incarcerated people and their families, and to advocate for justice and human dignity both inside and outside of prison. Established on the belief that all people are created in God's image and that no life is beyond His reach, Prison Fellowship takes a restorative approach to all those affected by crime and incarceration.

Crime demands accountability, and punishment for crime should be proportional. The issue of proportionality, whether the penalty "fits" the crime, is salient to today's conversation. While there is certainly a role for license suspension in driving related cases with meaningful safety concerns, license suspensions are too often imposed in cases entirely unrelated to unsafe driving.¹ These suspensions limit a person's ability to maintain gainful employment, care for their families, report to supervision check ins, and pay off court debt—especially in rural counties without robust public transportation.² And, when license suspension is overused, prosecutors, officers, and courts are forced to divert limited resources from critical public safety threats to responding to those who drive on a suspended license.³

Access to transportation, is essential for many men and women seeking to leave crime and incarceration behind. SB 37 would address the overuse of driver's license suspensions by limiting driver's license suspension for offenses not related to unsafe driving or failure to pay court fines. However, the bill will permit suspension of a driver's license to still be used as a tool to maintain safety on the road.

As we hold people accountable, it's very important to think critically about whether the penalty fits the crime. SB 37 takes a meaningful step in that direction by giving Ohioans a longer grace period to show proof of financial responsibility to avoid a driver license suspension. When people can drive legally and safely, they are able to take care of their families, hold a job, and be a contributing member of the community.

Thank you for your time and I hope you will consider passing SB 37.

Ally Alfonsetti
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¹ Anne K. Sweeney, et al., *Road to Nowhere: Debt-Related Driver's License Suspensions in Ohio*, The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland (Sept. 2022), https://lasclv.org/wp-content/uploads/Road-to-Nowhere_hirez.pdf.

² Letter from Americans for Prosperity, et al., to Senator Charles Schumer, Senator Mitch McConnell, Senator Richard Durbin, and Senator John Thune (March 25, 2021), https://finesandfeesjusticecenter.org/content/uploads/2021/03/Driving-for-Opportunity-Act_Letter-of-Support_2021-1.pdf.

³ Letter from Patrick Yoes, National President, National Fraternal Order of Police to Senator Christopher Coons and Senator Roger F. Wicker (March 26, 2021), <https://fop.net/letter/s-998-driving-for-opportunity/>.