

December 9, 2024

Chairman Ghanbari
House Homeland Security Committee
1 Capitol Square Columbus, Ohio 43215

RE: Senate Bill 37

Chairman Ghanbari, Vice Chair Plummer, and members of the House Homeland Security Committee,

My name is Sarah Ferrato, and I write today in support of Senate Bill 37 as someone who has been directly impacted by the laws that the bill proposes to change. If this bill were in place at the time I was cited for expired car tags, I wouldn't have had further interactions with the criminal justice system, which led to an unpaid ticket and a license suspension, resulting in approximately \$400 and countless hours spent to have my license reinstated.

My experience began with being pulled over for expired car tags and issued, what I thought, was a warning by the officer. Months later, I was pulled over again and informed that I was driving under a license suspension due to an unpaid \$25 ticket for expired tags. I was informed I must find someone to drive my car home within 20 minutes or have it towed. Wanting to avoid compounding fees, I scrambled to find a friend who could drive a manual car. Thankfully, I was able to find a friend available and willing, which is not the case for so many. Days later, I received a letter of license suspension notification postdated for the very day I was pulled over.

Mounting fees came by way of requesting a continuance due to required work travel, which was impacted heavily when I was repeatedly searched at multiple airports because I did not have a license to present TSA. More money– and more resources– were required to reinstate my license ahead of my court hearing. This step was recommended by an attorney, as this increases the chances for more lenient outcomes. Again, I benefited from having connections and resources to complete this task, which is not the case for so many. This journey concluded with me pleading not guilty at the court hearing and engaging in a pre-trial call with the prosecutor, who ultimately dismissed my license suspension charges. Each step in this process required time, approved time off from my employer, money, and community support.

Thankfully, I was able to get this sorted out, and had the resources to do so, but so many Ohioans are not in the same position, facing much worse outcomes. I can't imagine spending time in jail for something like this, let alone the devastating consequences that include losing a job, only increasing the chances of remaining in a cycle of poverty that is criminalized through policies like debt-related license suspensions.

I deeply appreciate Sens. Blessing and Ingrahm for bringing this legislation forward, and I urge the House Homeland Security Committee to support it.

Sincerely,
Sarah Ferrato
Cleveland Heights, OH