



THE BUCKEYE INSTITUTE

Driver's License Suspensions Should Be Related to Driving Offenses

Interested Party Testimony
Ohio House Homeland Security Committee
Ohio Senate Bill 37

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Chair Ghanbari, Vice Chair Plummer Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify regarding **Ohio Senate Bill 37**.

My name is Greg R. Lawson. I am a research fellow at **The Buckeye Institute**, an independent research and educational institution—a think tank—whose mission is to advance free-market public policy in the states.

Senate Bill 37 includes policies that pursue the kinds of criminal justice reform that The Buckeye Institute has **championed** for more than a decade. The bill wisely limits the use of driver's license suspension as a penalty for offenses unrelated to driving.

Driver's license suspensions should concern ensuring public safety, and they make sense when they target dangerous offenses involving operating motor vehicles, driving under the influence, and vehicular homicide. Unfortunately, suspensions are used too often as penalties for other offenses that have little or no connection to driving. **Research** by the Marshall Project and Cleveland's WEWS News 5 showed that the Ohio Bureau of Motor Vehicles issued 200,000 debt-related license suspensions in 2022. And the Legal Aid Society of Cleveland **found** that more than one million Ohioans had suspended driver's licenses each year from 2016 to 2020, with higher concentrations in urban areas and among lower-income households.

Academic research has demonstrated the serious **ramifications** of such suspensions, including loss of autonomy, impaired health, lower social capital, and employment challenges. Those without a driver's license face tremendous difficulty obtaining and retaining meaningful employment, and license suspensions shrink the pool of available workers for Ohio businesses already **struggling** to meet their employment needs.

Particularly **important** is the bill's removal of using driver's license suspensions to sanction truancy, drug offense misdemeanors unrelated to driving, court fines, and other debt-related offenses. These eliminations will help hundreds of thousands avoid financial traps that breed other social problems, while still protecting the public against real vehicular dangers.

Thank you for your time and attention. I would be happy to answer any questions that the Committee might have.

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