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Dayton Clerk of Court Testimony on SB 37 before the House Homeland Security Committee

December 11, 2024

Chairman Ghanbari, Vice Chair Plummer, Ranking Member Thomas, and esteemed members of the House Homeland Security Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this piece of legislation. My Name is Marty Gehres. I am the Clerk of the Dayton Municipal Court, the largest municipal court in Montgomery County. I am here today on behalf of my office, Kettering Clerk of Court Rob Scott, and the Ohio Poverty Law Center.

There are too many unlicensed drivers on our local roads, and too many of them are suspended not because they are dangerous drivers but simply because they could not afford to pay a ticket or missed a court date. Since my election in 2021, I have made it a priority to help reduce the barriers that prevent our residents from obtaining a valid driver's license by expanding our self-help center and hosting community license reinstatement clinics.

Senate Bill 37 is a good first step in ending the Ohio License suspension Cycle and helping our residents obtain a valid license. Prohibiting the Ohio BMV from suspending or revoking a driver's license for offenses that are non-driving related will help more Ohioans keep a valid driver's license, which will, in turn, lead to more insured drivers on our streets and reduce the fees that can stack up and make it nearly impossible for people to obtain a valid drivers license.

Even with this tool removed, courts can follow the lead of the Dayton Municipal Clerk of Court and the Kettering Municipal Clerk of Court use less punitive enforcement mechanisms, such as placing a block on an individual's driver's license and vehicle registration. Although this alternative may take longer to garner the individual's attention, it allows them to handle the situation with a less punitive and more individualized path to take care of their court issue while also becoming valid.

Reinstating a driver's license is a highly complicated and challenging process. There can be a feeling of hopelessness that comes with a license suspension, and without the resources to rectify their situation, it can seem impossible due to the amount of money owed, which in turn leads to individuals repeating the cycle and driving without a valid license.

Your support of Ohio Senate Bill 37 is a significant first step in ending the Ohio license suspension cycle.

