

Proponent Testimony on SB 37

February 20, 2023

Chairman Manning, Vice-Chair Reynolds, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present written proponent testimony for SB 37.

Men and women in Ohio with a criminal record should be afforded opportunities to safely live up to their God-given potential, serve their neighbors, and contribute to their communities. Lawmakers must strive to remove unnecessary government barriers for Ohioans with a criminal record that are not tied to a clear public safety risk. As the nation's largest Christian non-profit serving prisoners, former prisoners, and their families, Prison Fellowship requests your support for SB 37 to remove barriers to opportunity regarding driver's license suspensions.

Crime demands accountability and proportional punishment, including suspending a person's ability to drive where appropriate. Too often, driver's license suspensions are imposed in cases entirely unrelated to irresponsible driving. Current Ohio law uses driver's license suspension as a penalty for roughly 70 offenses, including misconduct unrelated to safety on the road.¹ These suspensions limit a person's ability to maintain gainful employment, care for their families, and pay off court debt—especially in rural communities where public transportation is lacking.² Meanwhile, law enforcement officers, courts, and prosecutors can misdirect limited resources and time responding to driving with suspended licenses instead of critical public safety threats.³

SB 37 would restrict the overuse of driver's license suspension as a penalty for offenses unrelated to irresponsible driving. Specifically, it would remove driver's license suspension as a sanction for truancy and drug offense misdemeanors unrelated to driving. This would also extend to felony drug offenses, except when the conviction does not reflect the most serious felony degree for that specific crime. The bill would ensure more careful use of driver's license suspension in failure to pay child support cases so as not to disrupt access to work and the ability to meet financial obligations. Under SB 37, driver's license suspensions will remain a tool for accountability and maintaining safety on the road, but would be applied in a more focused manner with fewer negative consequences for Ohioans pursuing work, good citizenship, and opportunity.

Through targeted driver's license suspension reforms, lawmakers can remove government barriers to success and employment for Ohioans, and better position them to thrive as parents, employees, and neighbors. We ask that you support and pass this legislation.

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¹ *Hearing on Senate Bill 301*, 134th Leg., (April 5, 2022) (Statement of Senator Louis Blessing III before the S. Comm. On the Judiciary).

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/>.