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**Testimony in Support of Sub. SB 37**  
**Regina Campbell, Attorney**  
**Legal Aid Society of Greater Cincinnati**  
**Senate Judiciary Committee**  
**December 13, 2023**

Chairman Manning, Vice Chair Reynolds, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of Substitute Senate Bill 37. My name is Regina Campbell, and I am an attorney at the Legal Aid Society of Greater Cincinnati. Our mission is to resolve serious legal problems of low-income people, to promote economic and family stability, and to reduce poverty through effective legal assistance.

At Legal Aid, I manage the practice group entitled Income, Work and Health. As part of that practice group, I manage a long-standing project called Clearing Legal Hurdles to Employment (CLH). In CLH, we partner with social service agencies in our 7-county service area that are helping people get and keep employment. While the agencies help participants with resumes, interviews, employment skills and job coaching, we help with any legal barriers that can disrupt stability and make it more difficult for people to get and keep employment.

One of the most referred legal barriers is a suspended driver's license. Invariably, a partner agency refers a participant in their program because the client needs their license to get or keep employment. Even if the client lives in the heart of Cincinnati where bus service is good, the amount of time it takes to depend on public transportation is not an option for many. Most of my clients must take children to childcare and school before starting their workday. If they must use public transportation, it adds hours of time to their day. For those living in more suburban or rural areas, there simply is no reliable and easily accessible public transportation available on a daily basis. For most Ohioans, even those living in an urban corridor with available public transportation, a car and a valid driver's license are necessary for employment.

Advising clients on their options to get a valid driver's license is one of the most frustrating things I do as a Legal Aid attorney. In most cases I am telling people that there is no option for driving privileges; the only way they can get a valid license is to pay off tickets and judgments with money they simply do not have. And most partner agencies are not allowed under their funding to pay off court-imposed fines.

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Many people serve suspensions for years simply because they cannot afford to pay their way out. If they had the means, they could end the suspensions quickly, or avoid them in the first place. Collection agencies demand monthly payments high in excess of what my clients can afford. Unless a court is friendly and would consider waiving traffic fines previously imposed, in most cases there is quite literally nothing that I can do for my client. I simply advise them and close the case without eliminating the barrier or changing their circumstances in any meaningful way. I refer some to our bankruptcy team to begin the long process of filing bankruptcy for the sole purpose of getting a valid driver's license.

The new limitations on suspension proposed in sub SB 37 are quite literally life-changing for my clients. Allowing people to maintain a valid license even if they cannot afford to immediately pay off a traffic fine gives low-income people the same stability afforded to those with a higher income who can immediately pay their fine. Allowing people to cure a non-compliance suspension by showing current proof of insurance will encourage my clients to get their insurance back as soon as they can afford it. The stability of a valid license increases my clients' ability to maintain employment which in turn makes it more likely that they can afford to pay their monthly car insurance premiums, and have income to pay off the fines they may owe to courts.

I urge you to support Substitute Senate Bill 37. Thank you for the opportunity to address this committee.

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