

**WRITTEN TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF OHIO SB 37 FOR  
CONSIDERATION BEFORE THE OHIO SENATE JUDICIARY  
COMMITTEE, CHAIRMAN MANNING, VICE-CHAIR REYNOLDS AND  
COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

**PREPARED BY MONTE COLLINS, CITIZEN, AND GRADUATE OF  
TOWARDS EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM**

## **Statement of Monte Collins**

Honorable Committee members, thank you for this opportunity to present this testimony on SB37.

I strongly support the legislation and want to use my time to describe how a suspended license interfered with my education and employment. This legislation will remove that barrier for millions of Ohioans who drive safely.

I first obtained a driver's license in 2008. I was excited about getting the license because I could now drive to high school. However, I was not able to afford insurance. Shortly after getting my license, I was driving to school on Euclid Ave. when a police officer pulled me over. My license was suspended for driving without insurance. To restore it, I had to post a bond called an SR-22. This cost \$175 a month – a sum that any high school kid would be hard pressed to keep up with. I was no exception.

One of the ways that I was able to pay for the SR-22, when I could pay, was working at a fast-food restaurant. That source of income ended abruptly after I was stopped again for driving with a suspended license. This time the judge sent

me to jail for 7 days. That cost me my job. So now the fines and fees were piling up, and my ability to pay them had vanished.

I am persistent and despite the stint in jail and working to try to pay off the fees and fines from that, I graduated from high school in 2010. I immediately enrolled in Cuyahoga County Community College, where I took math and computer science, among other subjects. The same police officer pulled me over multiple times for driving with a suspended license. I told him that I was just trying to get to class. He was sympathetic. But as he put it “I have to do what I have to do.”

The judge was not sympathetic. This time I was sentenced to 21 days in jail, which ended my college career.

I have overcome many barriers, but I have not done it alone. A little more than a year ago I heard about Towards Employment. The training they provided and the support that came with it seemed like a good way to get out of the vicious cycle I was in. It was a move that turned my life around.

After completing the training program, I worked at Towards Employment while waiting to be placed in a manufacturing job. To supplement my wages, Towards Employment also provided a bus pass so that I could get to work.

Then something truly miraculous happened. The Towards Employment staff dipped into a fund provided by the Ohio Children's Trust Fund that paid off my fees and fines a sum that by then, totaled \$5,000! The staff also helped me figure out which jurisdictions were owed money, and how to maneuver the complicated payment systems. Towards Employment also paid the downpayment and first month of insurance so I could get my license back. Within a month, I had saved enough money to buy a car.

Today, I am a machine operator at ACOR Products in Cleveland. Driving is the only possible way for me to get to my current employment.

Many people whose licenses have been suspended are not as fortunate as I was. They remain in that catch 22 – unable to pay off their fines, yet not able to legally to drive to a job to pay down those fines. That's why I support SB37. It will break the vicious cycle by restoring the right to drive for Ohioans and get them back to work.

Thank you for this opportunity to share my experience with you.

Respectfully,

Monte Collins