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Testimony from:
Alan Smith, Midwest Region Director, R Street Institute

Testimony in **SUPPORT** of SB 37, "...to make changes to the laws governing driver's license suspensions for certain drug offenses and failure to pay child support and to the laws governing penalties for failure to provide proof of financial responsibility."

February 28, 2024

Senate Judiciary Committee

Chair Manning, Vice Chair Reynolds, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson and members of the Judiciary Committee,

My name is Alan Smith, and I serve as the Midwest Director of the R Street Institute. R Street is a nonprofit nonpartisan public policy research organization. Our policy is to engage in policy research and outreach to promote free markets and effective limited-government across a variety of policy areas, including maintenance and sometimes reform of the criminal justice system. This is why Senate Bill 37 is important to us.

Our Census bureau tells us that [82 percent](#) of Ohioans drive themselves to work. Recent research detailing the impact of driver's license suspensions informs us that in an average year, there are over [one million drivers](#) with suspended licenses in the Buckeye state. These two facts do not harmonize well.

From my time working in this building on legislative staff I recognize that getting people to do what they are required to do is a bigger challenge with every passing year, and the government is asked to shoulder increasing responsibility in this regard. This presents limited government public policy organizations like mine with unceasing challenges.

At inception, using the leverage of privilege to drive a vehicle may have seemed appropriate for either denying dangerous drivers the use of the highways or applying pressure to pay up. As you have discussed in previous hearings, offenses for which the driving privilege could be withheld have multiplied, including those unpaid fines. The magnitude of these averages [nearly a billion dollars](#).

When it has become clear that a so-called solution to a problem is not successfully mitigating the problem, a basic requirement of public policy is violated. Senator Blessing and Senator Ingram are to be congratulated for taking on the responsibility of updating a government response to today's landscape. Modernization of many government policies is turning to some degree toward sustaining a workforce over traditional ideas of punishment which cause collateral damage to jobs and the ability to pay off debts by getting to work.

All of us who labor in public policy are inclined to be as helpful as possible in finding alternative solutions to many of the pathologies in our state. As these hearings have illuminated, many of our sister states have been prompted to recalibrate their prescriptions in this area, as we are now contemplating.

We support changes to Ohio policy represented by the substitute bill which are aligned with the considerable research now available.

I would be happy to respond to any of your questions.

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