



**Juanita Brent**  
State Representative  
12<sup>th</sup> House District

### Sponsor Testimony - House Bill 285

Chair Manning, Vice Chair Brenner, Ranking Member Maharath, and the members of the Senate Local Government, Public Affairs and Veterans Affairs Committee. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to testify today in support of House Bill 285, legislation aimed at establishing a permanent Driver's License Fee Debt Reduction and Amnesty Program.

The Driver's License Fee Debt Reduction and Amnesty program was first introduced as a pilot program in the 132<sup>nd</sup> General Assembly by my predecessor former State Rep. John Barnes and State Rep. Dave Greenspan as House Bill 336. HB 336 received major bi-partisan support in both the House and Senate chambers. It was voted out of the House 92-1, then voted out of the Senate unanimously before passing a third and final time in the House 87-6.

During the initial six month Amnesty program, more than 76,000 Ohioans took advantage of the Driver's License Reinstatement program and were able to have their fees reduced or waived completely. These Ohioans saved more than \$63 million and the Ohio Bureau of Motor Vehicles collected more than \$3.6 million in fines and fees, money that the Ohio Poverty Law Center believes that the state would not have received otherwise.

House Bill 285 would expand the list of public assistance programs that people can be on and have their fees waived completely. Those programs include Ohioans using Medicaid, Ohio Works First, SSI, and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs pension program. The bill would also automatically notify eligible participants of the Amnesty program so there will no longer be a need for Amnesty events around the state.

According to the Ohio Poverty Law Center, 83% of Ohioans have to drive themselves to work each day and 1 out of 8 Ohioans has a suspended license. This is a huge percentage of Ohioans that rely on their personal vehicle to get to and from places. The issue of suspended licenses prove to be a huge barrier to people trying to live the Ohio Promise; that they can live, work, and retire right here at home. To provide an example of how this issue is affecting Ohioans, please allow me to share this story. There was a woman in Cleveland who was a young mother of 3 kids who had multiple traffic tickets. The woman was working a minimum wage job to take care of herself and her kids. It eventually got to the point where the tickets turned into a suspended license. The woman was caught driving with the suspended license and was arrested while her kids were in the car. She lost her job and housing as a result.



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Stories like this occur all over the state and there are cases where Ohioans are leaving because of suspended license fees are too big of a burden. We know that the minimum wage is not a livable wage and that public transit investment here in Ohio should be better. These things, among others, need to be resolved within the state but until those things are resolved, House Bill 285 is here to be a step in the right direction.

I have already noted the success of the Amnesty program. It was so successful that it was brought back in October of 2019 and is currently funded until the end of 2019 thanks to the Ohio State budget. The Driver's License Fee Debt Reduction and Amnesty program has done great and has benefitted both participants in the program as well as Ohio.

That is why I respectfully ask this Committee to support House Bill 285 and the permanent Driver's License Fee Debt Reduction and Amnesty program. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Juanita Brent  
State Representative of Ohio House District 12

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Juanita Brent", is written below the typed name and title.