



## **Sponsor Testimony**

### **Representative Dave Greenspan**

#### **House Bill 285**

Chair Manning, Vice-Chair Brenner, Ranking Member Maharath, and Members of the Senate Local Government, Public Safety and Veterans Affairs Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony for a very important piece of legislation – House Bill 285, which would make permanent the 132nd General Assembly House Bill 336, the Reinstatement Fee Amnesty Initiative, retitled for House Bill 285 as the Driver’s License Reinstatement Fee Debt and Amnesty Program.

This bill requires the registrar of motor vehicles to make permanent a driver's license reinstatement fee reduction and amnesty program. House Bill 336, from the 132nd General Assembly created a 6 month “pilot” program which ran from February 1, 2019 to July 31, 2019. Additionally, the General Assembly and the Governor perfected, in the 2020-21 Operating Budget, House Bill 166, an extension of the program until December 31, 2019.

#### **Where Did This Concept Come From? Providing Some Context**

Currently there are over 8 million drivers licenses issued in Ohio. Over 1 million of the over 8 million issued driver’s license are suspended, with an average of nearly three suspensions per license holder. Many Ohioans currently under suspension for an extended period of time do not have the financial means to pay the reinstatement fees. This bill seeks to reduce the number of drivers on the road without a valid license and without automobile insurance while simultaneously reducing the amount of administrative backlog with the Ohio Bureau of Motor Vehicles. It is our goal to create a reasonable, practical, and measured attempt to make

sure that Ohioans are legal to drive with a valid driver's license and insurance while driving through our neighborhoods and on our interstates. Equally important, is those who seek the relief offered by this bill will have the added advantage of being able to seek or maintain employment which may be limited or prevented because of their failure to have legal driving privileges.

### **Eligibility**

A person whose driver's license or permit has been suspended as a result of eligible offense may apply to the registrar for driver's license reinstatement fee debt reduction if the person has completed all court-ordered sanctions related to the eligible offence other than payment of reinstatement fees and at least eighteen months have expired since the end of the period of suspension ordered by the court.

Eligible Offense means offenses for which did not involve alcohol, a drug of abuse, combination thereof, or a deadly weapon. A perfecting amendment is also being drafted for the committee's consideration which will include solicitation under the list of **ineligible** offenses.

### **Fee Reduction Program**

A person whose license has been suspended because of an eligible offense will be automatically enrolled in the program and notified of their eligibility for a reinstatement fee reduction as long as the individual has completed all court-ordered sanctions, and at least eighteen months has expired since the court imposed the suspension.

- a. If the person owes reinstatement fees for multiple eligible offenses, the person shall be required to pay either the lowest reinstatement fee owed for those offenses or ten percent of the total amount owed for those offenses, whichever amount is greater
- b. If the person owes reinstatement fees for only one eligible offense, the person shall be required to pay one-half of the reinstatement fee owed for that offense.

Eligible persons will be notified by mail, and email if an email address is known, that they are eligible for reduced fees and what their payment plan looks like, and given the option of paying online, by mail, or in person, with the standard deputy registrar administrative fees being charged if they choose to complete the transaction in person.

### **Amnesty Program**

The Registrar shall grant complete amnesty to a person eligible as long as they meet the definition of “indigent” under this bill. Which shall include participation in any of the following programs:

- a. Supplemental nutritional assistance program
- b. Medicaid program
- c. Ohio Works First Program
- d. Supplemental security income program
- e. United States Department of Veterans Affairs pension benefit program

### **Public Service Announcement and Promotion of the Program**

The Registrar shall conduct a public service announcement program regarding the driver's license reinstatement fee reduction and amnesty program that includes a description of the program and its requirements. In addition, the Registrar shall make such information available on the Bureau of Motor Vehicle's web site. While the bill is designed to automatically enroll eligible persons into the program, anyone who believes they may be eligible for the program but has not enrolled will be able to apply for enrollment. The bill also requires that a toll-free phone number be established and the number also listed on the BMV's web site for persons who have not received a notice in the mail or email but would like to inquire about their eligibility and enrollment status, or to get more information about the program.

### **Notice of Denial**

If the registrar denies an application under the program, the registrar shall provide an explanation in writing to the applicant that states the reason the application was denied.

I am thankful to the Registrar, Ohio Bureau of Motor vehicles, Legal Aid Society and the Ohio State Bar Association for their commitment to solve this problem, and working so closely with us throughout this process.

I have submitted along with my testimony some documents from the Department of Public Safety and the Ohio

Poverty Law Center which illustrates the tremendous success of the pilot program, and which provide additional data for the committee to consider as we seek to make this program permanent.

Thank you your consideration of this bill, and I am available for your questions.