



**STATEMENT OF THE OHIO STATE BAR ASSOCIATION
IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 285**

Presented by Elizabeth Mote, Esq.
Before the Senate Local Government, Public Safety and Veterans Affairs Committee
Senator Nathan Manning, Chair
January 21, 2020

Chairman Manning, vice-chair Brenner, ranking member Maharath, and members of the Senate Local Government, Public Safety and Veterans Affairs Committee. On behalf of the Ohio State Bar Association, I am pleased to offer proponent testimony in support of House Bill 285.

My name is Elizabeth Mote, a partner with the law firm of Kitrick, Lewis & Harris. Additionally, I am the chair of the Ohio State Bar Association's Young Lawyer Section. During the six-month pilot attorneys from our section volunteered at 4 different clinics. Having personally volunteered at multiple clinics, I can speak first-hand about the benefits of the amnesty program and the need to continue the program indefinitely.

The tangible benefits can easily be seen. Through this program, the BMV can collect discounted fees from thousands of citizens that after the program will be able to register as drivers. In fact, during the first month of the pilot the BMV reported that they were able to approve more than 21,000 fee reductions or amnesties. In just one month, 21,000 people could now legally drive to work or to take care of their family. That is nothing short of amazing and this institution and specifically Rep. Greenspan and Rep. Barnes should be commended for the life-changing affect the pilot program has had on so many Ohioans.

What cannot be as easily seen is how this positive interaction with the Court shapes people's view of government and encourages rehabilitation. Participants in the pilot program were genuinely appreciative of the government's willingness to give them a second chance and many leave the clinic with a renewed sense of civic engagement. The program is also an excellent way for lesser experienced attorneys to gain valuable experience working with clients and it is a great avenue for the newest generation of attorneys to put their desire to help bridge the access to justice gap to work.

I am also proud to speak today on behalf of the Ohio State Bar Association who recently unanimously approved of this bill as a proposal from our Access to Justice Committee at our council of delegates meeting last May. The objectives of the OSBA as contained within our mission statement are to promote justice and advance the profession. We feel that House Bill 285 accomplishes both of those objectives as it allows for our profession to facilitate a just outcome for those who have shown a willingness to work towards rehabilitation with our criminal justice system.

We would like to point out that we are actively working with the sponsors of the bill and the Chair to make improvements to the substitute bill that was adopted in the House Transportation and Public Safety Committee. We believe that these changes are necessary because of the

unintended consequences that result from the amendment accepted in the House which states that each person can only utilize the program one time. We are working to make sure that the program is as impactful as possible, recognizing that people often get caught in a cycle of owing more than one reinstatement fees and it may be in a person's best interest to wait until more than one fee can be reduced.

Put simply, people want to do the right thing, they want to get back on their feet to be productive members of society. This program helps them do it. Thank you for your time today. I would be happy to answer any questions.