



Office of the Ohio Public Defender

Timothy Young, State Public Defender

**Testimony in Support of HB260
Limited Driving on Suspended License
Sponsors Representative Butler and Representative Sykes**

Chairman Green, Vice Chair Greenspan, Ranking Member Sheehy and members of the House Transportation and Public Safety Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of the Ohio Public Defender in support of House Bill 260. I am Niki Clum, the legislative liaison for the OPD.

As this committee knows, HB260 requires courts to grant limited driving privileges to individuals whose license is suspended for an offense unrelated to the operation or physical control of a vehicle. OPD supports HB260 because the devastating effects of license suspensions disproportionately impact indigent Ohioans.

As a former misdemeanor prosecutor, I saw firsthand the extensive negative consequences of suspending an individual's license for an offense unrelated to driving. Those individuals fall into, what many people call, the "BMV cycle of death." First, an individual's license is suspended. As the other witnesses have pointed out, the license suspension is often related to being indigent, for example a suspension for failure to pay child support. After an individual's license is suspended, they have no ability to get to their job or take their children to school or daycare. The individual is left with an impossible choice, lose their job and make their financial situation worse – or drive without a license. Many Ohioans choose to keep driving in order to provide for their families and be able to meet their basic needs.

If an individual is caught driving without a license, the court can impose fines and an additional license suspension. The fines and additional BMV reinstatement fees cause the individual to experience further financial hardship.

HB260 will save individuals who have not committed a traffic related infraction from having their license suspended and then being placed in the difficult position of deciding whether to lose their job or drive without a license. HB260 allows judges to use their discretion to grant these individuals specific driving privileges so they can get to work and continue to care for their families. Every person in Ohio benefits when capable individuals keep their jobs and Ohioans stay out of the BMV cycle of death.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak before your committee. I am happy to answer questions at this time.

