Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony regarding Senate Bill 160.

I am the Executive Director of Court Community Service, the non-profit agency that administers the placement of adult ordered by Cleveland Municipal, Cuyahoga County Common Pleas, and other municipal courts in the Greater Cleveland area. We have been operating since 1985, and I have been the Executive Director since 1993, and was previously the Assistant Director since 1986.

Our agency receives an average of 8,000 referrals per year from area courts. In a typical year individuals complete more than 250,000 hours of community service work at hundreds of local charitable and governmental agencies including hunger centers, food banks, local development corporations, and churches. In addition, many are placed on supervised work crews that clean public roads and vacant lots, mow lawns and shovel snow for seniors, remove graffiti, and work in community gardens.

Many individuals are referred to our program to “work off” fines and court fees because they have no means to pay. Often times are staff is asked “can I work off my BMV fees… I’m here because I have no means to pay and I want to do the right thing and I can’t drive unless I pay my BMV fees”. With more than half of our referrals being unemployed this is a frequent question we hear in our office.

By providing an option to perform community service work in to “work-off” BMV fees, individuals can have a path to driving legally while having to demonstrate responsible behavior and complete a defined number of work hours that, in turn, provide assistance to charitable agencies or help to improve their community though work on a supervised crew. It is a “win-win” for the Courts and our communities.

Thank you.