



Juanita Brent
State Representative
12th House District

Sponsor Testimony – House Bill 285

Chair Green, Vice Chair McClain, Ranking Member Sheehy, and members of the House Transportation and Public Safety 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 initial program was only set to last six months, from Jan 31 to July 31. Thankfully, the program will resume in October through the end of the year because of the extension that was put in the state's budget. And the reason I say thankfully isn't just because of opinions but because of fact. This program has been a success by either waiving reinstatement fees altogether or at least giving a 50% reduction in fees. Here in the legislature, we like to deal in facts and the fact is that this six-month pilot program helped thousands of Ohioans get back on the road and become mobile again.

To show you what I mean, I would like to share some facts and findings about the program. According to a report from the Ohio Poverty Law Center, 83% of Ohioans drive to work each day. That is a huge percentage and when you also know that there are more than 3 million pending license suspensions in the state, it puts into perspective even more how crucial it is that Ohioans be able to drive. More than 76,000 Ohioans took advantage of the driver's license reinstatement program and were able to have their fees reduced or completely waived. This is a tremendous accomplishment especially when you think about the program only being in operation for six months. 76,669 people saved more than \$63 million through this program and the 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.

It is also worth noting that House Bill 285 would expand the list of public assistance programs that can be used to establish indigence other than just SNAP and thus waiving fees completely. Those programs include Ohioans using Medicaid, Ohio Works First, the Supplemental Security Income program and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs pension program. This is a great addition to the bill because Ohioans living in poverty with a suspended license often have to choose between staying off the road and being able to live. This should not be the case. Ohioans should be able to live, work, and retire right here at home. And even if there are barriers preventing you from living a regular life and getting to work, we, as legislators, will work to eliminate these barriers for our people so they may live the American Dream. This is the Ohio promise.

In closing, the Driver's License Reinstatement Program has not only proven to get Ohioans back on the road and be law-abiding citizens but it is also providing money to the state that it would most likely not see without the Amnesty program. It is a win for everyone involved.



Juanita Brent
State Representative
12th House District

I respectfully ask this Committee to support House Bill 285 and the permanent Driver's License Fee Debt Reduction and Amnesty Program. We are available for your questions. Thank you.