
Tim Johnson

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HB29 135GA driver license suspensions

Chairman Ghanbari, Vice Chair Plummer, Ranking Member Thomas

And members of the Homeland Security Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity today to share my input on HB29 regarding driver license suspensions.

My name is Tim. I am an Air Force Veteran and a retired Law Enforcement Officer. As a retired LEO I spend some of my time advocating on various reform efforts addressing rules and laws of Ohio in need of dire change. The intentions HB29 caught my attention in addressing a change to driver license suspensions laws.

The impact that driving suspensions present to families, individuals, employers, society and the judicial system are greatly affected with Ohio's current statutes on issuing driver license suspensions. Yes, it is true that operating a vehicle upon the roadways of Ohio is a privilege. The problem with this privilege is when the judicial system is mandated to further the penalties of suspensions under a variety of violations. These penalties further perpetuate the problem which resulted in a suspension making it financially impossible to earn the privilege back.

Economically disadvantaged individuals continue to bury themselves financially as they are not able to cover the fees of a suspension set forth by the courts. In consideration the current minimum wage pay scale is not reflective of the current cost of living scale, causing many to choose between shelter, food and more vs paying the court costs of a suspension. Yes, many have an obligatory payment which must be met rightfully so. However, the suspension of driving privileges and seizure of one's transportation vessel only exacerbates this problem by making it difficult for one to maintain their employment so they can be financially responsible.

Perhaps this is the time to review and promulgate fair language in the driver license suspension statutes. The time to permit and encourage the courts Judicial discretion of “may” impose vs mandatory “shall” impose language. A time to institute a system promoting employment and financial responsibility rather than depriving an individual of societal responsibility.

During my tenure of 20 years, I issued hundreds of various license suspension citations. It wasn't long for me to understand and to witness the damage this caused to individuals, families, children, college students, employers and the court systems. While I agree penalties are meant to divert behaviors, we must find avenues of recourse that do not exacerbate the behaviors.

As a law enforcement officer, it is not only one's position to enforce the laws of the land, but it is also one's position to recognize the impurities of the laws and to say and to do something to encourage change. When laws and rules harm and hinder individuals or society, it is an obligation of the officer to respectfully and ethically bring to attention this harm and advocate for change.

I encourage the passage of HB29 and its parameters while maintaining the enforcement of an individual's financial responsibilities.

In safety,

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