

TO: Senate Judiciary Committee
FROM: Patrick Higgins, Policy Counsel, ACLU of Ohio, phiggins@acluohio.org
DATE: December 13, 2023
RE: Senate Bill 37 Proponent Testimony

Chairman Manning, Vice Chair Reynolds, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee:



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Dr. Ebony Speakes-Hall, LISW-S
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My name is Patrick Higgins, and I serve as Policy Counsel at the ACLU of Ohio. Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony in support of Senate Bill 37.

The ACLU of Ohio Supports Senate Bill 37 because it is a stride in addressing flaws in how our state government and its related bureaucracies wield damaging power over citizens and their driver's licenses. Simply put, this is smart policy in that it ends driver's license suspensions for many offenses that have nothing to do with driving. Restricting a person's mobility, and therefore their freedom, for wholly unrelated offenses is antithetical to what I believe is a goal shared between supporters of Senate Bill 37 and this Committee: a legal system that allows *all* Ohioans to prosper.

As Senate Bill 37's proponents have underscored since its introduction, Ohio's current driver's license suspension penalties set many of our neighbors up to fail because such penalties quickly become insurmountable to people who need to get to work, to their doctor, and to pick their children up from school. We live in an Ohio where 82% of us drive to work and only 1.4% rely on public transit.¹ The time for the changes contained in Senate Bill 37 is now, and I encourage you to support it.

Senate Bill 37 is sound policy because it:

- Opens the door for Ohioans to get right with the law and back on the road to participating more fully in Ohio's workforce;
- Brings Ohio in line with a rapidly growing number of states that are limiting driver's license suspensions to driving-related offenses;
- Ends driver's license suspension practices that punish Ohioans for being poor by stacking overwhelming fees and debt; and
- Ends ineffective policies that yield disproportionate, harmful outcomes for Black Ohioans and other People of Color.

¹ ROAD TO NOWHERE: DEBT-RELATED DRIVER'S LICENSE SUSPENSIONS IN OHIO. The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland 2022. Available at https://laslev.org/wp-content/uploads/Road-to-Nowhere_hirez.pdf.

Over the course of years, Ohio has been slowly unraveling the quagmire of driver's licenses suspensions in a way that gets more of us right with the law and on the road to health, education, family, and work, but the work is not yet done. This is what brings together the broad and ideologically diverse coalition of supporters you are hearing from today. Senate Bill 37 is the right vehicle for these important changes, and I encourage you to keep driving. The ACLU of Ohio stands ready to be of assistance with this critical piece of legislation. Please feel free to contact me with any questions that you may have.