

ACLU Ohio

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://www.acluohio.org/en/news/house-bill-158-proponent-testimony-0>

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Below is our Chief Lobbyist Gary Daniels' proponent testimony on House Bill 158. This was delivered to the Senate Local Government, Public Safety & Veterans Affairs Committee on January 21, 2020.

To Chairman Manning, Vice Chair Brenner, Ranking Member Maharath, and members of the Senate Local Government, Public Safety & Veterans Affairs Committee, thank you for this opportunity to present proponent testimony on House Bill 158.

The ACLU of Ohio encourages your support for HB 158 because it will make a positive difference in the life of your constituents. This is especially true for those struggling financially and for those who get swept up in the criminal justice system after something like a suspended license leads to a snowball effect of negative consequences.

Current Ohio law requires Ohio drivers to carry motor vehicle insurance and to present proof of that insurance in certain instances. If a driver fails to carry insurance or is unable to provide proof, they face escalating penalties of increased suspension lengths and increased reinstatement fees.

Mindful of this reality, HB 158 makes two welcome changes to current law/policy:

Last session, House Bill 336 created a limited-time reinstatement fee period and it passed with overwhelming support. That effort continues with HB 285, a bill before this committee today for consideration. Senate Bill 68 was passed by the Senate and is now in the House. It allows judges to approve community service in lieu of cash payment for reinstatement fees. HB 158 is another piece to this puzzle.

In addition to these efforts underway, the ACLU of Ohio has two broader, more impactful suggestions regarding drivers' license suspensions: First, reduce, via state law, the number of offenses and reasons that allow for license suspensions, particularly those with no relationship to operating a motor vehicle or public safety. Second, give courts increased authority to waive drivers' license reinstatement fees.

On both these points, I am positive this committee and the General Assembly will find many stakeholders, including the ACLU of Ohio, willing to assist members with such additional changes via future legislation, if not HB 158.

Still, the tweaks to an existing system found in this bill will directly benefit your constituents and all of Ohio. The ACLU of Ohio encourages your favorable consideration of House Bill 158.

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