

Testimony in Support of HB 285
Shannon G. Hardin
Columbus City Council, President
Senate – Local Government, Public Safety, and Veteran Affairs Committee
January 21st, 2020

Chair Manning, Vice Chair Brenner, Ranking Member Maharath, and members of the Senate Local Government, Public Safety, and Veterans Affairs Committee, my name is Shannon Hardin. I have the pleasure of serving the people of Columbus as City Council President. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 285, which would establish a program to reduce driver's license reinstatement debt.

As you all know, during the 132nd General Assembly you approved House Bill 336, creating the six-month Reinstatement Fee Amnesty Initiative to allow the BMV to waive or reduce reinstatement fees on eligible suspensions. I first learned of the six-month driver's license fee amnesty initiative from Franklin County Municipal Clerk of Courts Lori Tyack. She invited me down to a reinstatement clinic. I went down to check it out. I expected to see a handful of people there, a couple dozen at most. I was blown away. Hundreds of individuals had shown up early in the morning to get their licenses reinstated. While I saw hundreds, Clerk Tyack told me that over the course of their 3-day clinic, they served thousands of our neighbors. State-wide nearly 77,000 individuals were assisted by the pilot program, saving \$63 million dollars. The BMV also collected \$3.6 million in reinstatement fees from the program, an amount that the BMV likely would never have seen otherwise.

More important than the money is the fact that those folks who got their licenses reinstated now have more transportation choices. More than 80% of Columbus residents commute to work in a car. Lack of transportation options cuts off our residents' access to jobs, education, and healthcare. I believe HB #285 takes a strong step to level the transportation barrier and helps to pave the way to self-sufficiency.

In my remaining time, I'd like to tell you the story of a young woman who benefitted from the license reinstatement program. She was one of the first people served on the first day of the clinic. A young woman came in just to get her license reinstated and to deal with her fees. While her reinstatement application was being processed, the lawyers at the courthouse saw her record. They saw that she had been a victim of human trafficking. She had a record trailing her. With those offenses on her record, she wasn't able to get a job. She was barred many housing options. She was trapped in a cycle of poverty.

This young woman wasn't even aware of the rap sheet she carried with her. But, as her license was being reinstated, she was able to also complete paperwork to expunge her record. She was connected with the Franklin County Catch Court docket which specializes in providing resources and support to victims of trafficking.

She hugged staff members while crying because she was so thankful.

She came down to the courthouse that day so that she could drive legally again. She left with the chance for a clean slate. And I think that's another powerful part of this legislation. That young woman, like



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many human trafficking victims, are fearful of the system. They're fearful of court, lawyers, and law enforcement.

This legislation opens up the door for folks. HB 285 would help get more folks like that young woman get back on her feet. She's now back with a fighting chance to join the middle class and support herself. And we can all agree, that's an opportunity all of our residents deserve. I humbly encourage the committee to advance HB 285 and give more Ohioans a chance at redemption. Thank you for your time this afternoon.



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