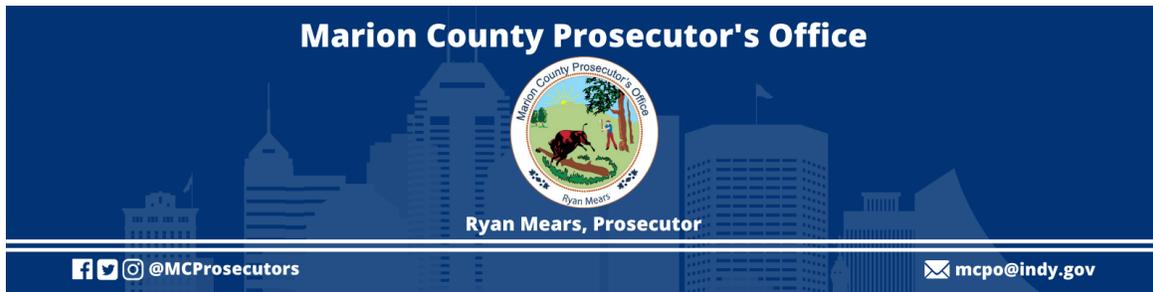


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Today state legislators will discuss the impact of suspended driver's licenses and costly BMV reinstatement fees on Hoosiers. This is an issue that the Marion County Prosecutor's Office believes deserves reform. Please see the statement below submitted by Prosecutor Ryan Mears and more information on social media [@MCPProsecutors](#).

Marion County Prosecutor Ryan Mears addressed the following statement to the Indiana legislature's Interim Study Committee on Roads and Transportation:

As the prosecuting attorney for the largest county in the state of Indiana, the Marion County Prosecutor's Office stands in full support of ending debt-based driver's license suspensions for the entirety of the state. We urge the Indiana legislature to put an end to the excessive fees one must pay to secure the reinstatement of their driver's license.

Legislation passed in 2014 extended the harmful effects unnecessary fines have on Hoosiers through nearly doubling license reinstatement fees. The current pandemic has presented devastating consequences to Indiana families and it is our social responsibility to alleviate frivolous expenses amidst this economic crisis.

Approximately 400,000 Indiana residents have suspended driver's licenses due to unpaid fines or fees, resulting in a cyclical poverty trap; those who can't pay the fees lose their means of transportation to their jobs, complicating their ability to ever pay the fees necessary to reinstate their license. In true nature of helping the constituents of Indiana, reinstatement fees must be eliminated or lowered.

Action has been taken across the state as initiatives to end debt-based license suspensions have become more common. Our office started the Second Chance Workshop to assist constituents, manage payments on tickets, and connect them with legal aid attorneys to petition for a waiver of reinstatement fees. We have seen the number of drivers with suspended licenses decrease from 100,000 to 83,000 due to this and other efforts; a significant drop since the inception of the program in 2019. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, our program has continued to provide tools to residents through virtual seminars. For the 311 individuals who have been assisted this year alone, the staggering total amount of reinstatement fees owed to the Bureau of Motor Vehicles was nearly \$500,000.

What we have also experienced is racial disparity in those who are punished with license suspensions, particularly as a result of fines and fees from common traffic violations. At our Second Chance Workshops, more than 77% of individuals who were assisted identified as

Black, a figure that far exceeds the proportion of Black residents in our county.

Additional actions to combat debt-based license suspensions include Representative Shackelford's 2019 traffic amnesty law, allowing constituents to continue driving after paying a reduced rate on their reinstatement fees. Even the United States Senate is hearing S.4186, the Driving for Opportunity Act, which would provide grants to states once they submit a plan to end license reinstatement fees, creating a cost neutral scenario for the state of Indiana.

Alternatives exist to aid Hoosiers in reinstating their license, but more can be done. There are still too many constituents driving with suspended licenses due to reasons unrelated to public safety. We cannot continue to charge excessive fees for one of the most basic tools to escape the cycle of poverty. The Marion County Prosecutor's Office fully supports legislation to reduce or eliminate debt-based license suspensions and look forward to reviewing legislative suggestions.

Thank you for your consideration of this issue. It is one of fundamental fairness and it impacts Hoosiers in every corner of the state.

Sincerely,
Ryan Mears
Marion County Prosecutor



| [WEBSITE](#) |

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