



ENACTMENT NEWS

House Bill 285

Driver's License Reinstatement Fee Debt Reduction and Amnesty Program

Effective September 15, 2020

On June 16, 2020, Governor DeWine signed House Bill 285 (Reps. Greenspan and Brent) into law. The bill makes permanent the temporary reinstatement-fee-amnesty program that expired at the end of 2019.

By way of background, House Bill 336 of the 132nd General Assembly created the "Reinstatement Fee Amnesty Initiative," initially a six-month pilot program that was extended in the Operating Budget of the 133rd General Assembly, ultimately expiring at the end of 2019. H.B. 285 makes that program permanent, and makes several changes to the program as it existed in its pilot state.

A regular driver's license holder (commercial license holders are ineligible) is eligible under the updated program if 1) the license was suspended for a certain eligible offense, 2) 18 months have passed since the end of the suspension period for at least one of the person's eligible offenses, 3) the person owes reinstatement fees, and 4) the person has not previously taken advantage of the program.

If a person meets the above criteria, he or she is eligible for a reduction in the reinstatement amount owed to the Bureau of Motor Vehicles. The amount owed under that reduction is either 50% of the reinstatement fee owed (if only one reinstatement fee is owed), or, if the person has multiple suspensions, then either the lowest fee owed or 10% of the total fees eligible for reduction (whichever is lower). If, however, the person qualifies as indigent, he or she is eligible for a full waiver of all eligible reinstatement fees owed. A person qualifies as indigent under the bill if they participate in any of the following: Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP), Medicaid, Ohio Works First, Supplemental Security Income, or the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Pension Benefit Program.

The program is to be rolled out in two phases. The first is for drivers whose offense that lead to the suspension occurred before the bill's effective date, and the second phase for those offenses that occur after the effective date. A person is not eligible for the program during Phase 2 if they were eligible under Phase 1.

Under the bill, the Director of the Department of Public Safety is to send notice to all eligible individuals, automatically enrolling them in the program and outlining all relevant details, and notifying them that they may submit proof of indigence for a full waiver of eligible fees.

The House passed the bill by a vote of 91-1 on November 6, 2019 and the Senate by a vote of 32-0 on May 20, 2020. The House concurred in amendments added in the Senate on May 28, 2020 by a vote of 93-0. The bill takes effect on September 15, 2020.