

To the Pennsylvania Legislatures,

February 1, 2018

I am writing to you regarding Resolution 76, HB 163 and HB 42: bills that pertain to the suspension of driver's licenses for social non-conformance. If the purpose of suspending a license is to gain compliance, Best Practice and the Motor Vehicle Association, both agree these suspensions do not work. Why then, do we continue the practice? If it is to punish, this punishment is excessive, and therefore cruel. All individuals that have suspended licenses are in a geographic prison. Those that have no bus transportation are fundamentally on house arrest. Those with bus transportation are limited to the bus line, and no farther. We continue their "punishment" long after they have served their time. The argument that this is not a punishment because it is not a criminal sanction but administrative, doesn't hold water. Punishment is punishment, no matter what they want to label it.

My name is James Sed and am the managing partner for Prison Prep. My company assists those who have been indicted navigate the Court system and coach them along the way through incarceration and through reentry, so that they can reenter successfully. I have also had the experience of incarceration, having served 90 months in Federal prison. The irony is that the Feds no longer suspend driver's licenses. They have realized the detrimental effects this practice has.

Without a license a parolee's chance of employment is greatly diminished. Even today with so many employers offering second chances, they will not employ without a license. Without a license they have no job, no money for housing, or opportunity to be upwardly mobile in the job or housing market. Many landlords will not rent to those who do not have a license. Pennsylvania is putting large amounts of money into reentry programs, but many fail in the programs because they can't get there consistently, or can't get to job leads and other assistance they received at the programs. This also causes compliance issues with their parole agents. There is also a plethora of parolees that can't take advantage of these programs because they reside in rural areas that offer no transportation.

The initial 3 months is a critical time in supervision, and when men and women can't get out of their old environment, find employment, or suitable housing they lose heart. At times, some come home not even knowing they have a suspension. Many work hard garnering skills and making plans for their futures only to find they have no license. I can tell you, this never goes well. There is a definite correlation between having a license suspension and recidivism.

New releases are asked to get a job, support their families, get to treatment and mandated visits, and pay FC/R. But, we take away their means to do so. This creates much collateral damage as families fractured, do to the stress of having to take on the responsibilities of the parolee, begin to fall apart. The parolee becomes another mouth to feed, and body to clothe and transport. One individual I know, Nate, has an elderly father and mother with cancer. He has access to some transportation, but even when that bus can get him where he needs to go, his father must get him to the bus stop 5 miles away. Nate stated he feels horrible about his father having to worry about getting him to where he needs to go, in addition to having to do all the transportation for his mother's chemo and medical appointments. Adding to Nate's stress is that he is not even able to do the simplest chores for his father, such as grocery shop or pick up medication at the drug store. It is all on his father. Nate also has received his BA from California University but can't find employment: not because employers will not

hire him, but because of his transportation issues. We are keeping people on public assistance. We are keeping people poor.

These suspensions put agents in a difficult situation. If the parolee is doing all that is asked, and not violating, except to drive to work, what do they do? I realize it is a violation, but faced with driving or not having the rent, statistics say 75% will drive. Agents don't want them violating the law, but we don't want to take away a job that is so hard to find, thereby putting their residence, and/or family in jeopardy.

Historically, those that lose most are urban black and Latino populations. For them a license is the key to unlocking the job market.

I hope this information is helpful. Thank you for your consideration regarding these necessary changes.

James Sed

Managing Partner