

To: House Judiciary Committee Subcommittee on Civil Law
From: Karl Wade Roberts
Date: March 8, 2021
Re: Support for HB 2523, Driver License Suspensions and Reinstatement

My name is Karl Wade Roberts and I live in Baker City, Oregon. I lost my license in 1994 and have not been able to get it back because I have not had the money to pay off all of the fines and fees.

I have been unable to work since May of 2003 due to the combined effects of injuries from a car accident in 1984 and a traumatic brain injury in 2003. My wife Mary is also disabled and unable to drive herself. Together we receive around \$1,100 a month in SSI and retirement.

This all started in 1994 when I failed to pay a traffic ticket because I did not have the money right away. The fines grew and so I lost my license. The fines I was unable to pay just kept growing and I got more tickets for minor traffic violations or driving without a license.

Living in rural Oregon, I had to continue driving in order to do certain things. I would make trips in the car even though I did not have a license because I needed to try to continue working to pay off my fines. Driving without a license was very stressful but I did not know how else to make a living or to pay off the fines. I used a bicycle for shorter trips to the grocery store and things like that, even in the winter. Eventually, I couldn't do that anymore because of my health problems.

After 2003, I was too disabled to work, but had to find transportation to medical appointments for me and my wife. My wife also has many health problems and requires frequent medical care. Without a license, we have difficulty scheduling medical appointments, and getting the care that we need.

Over the years we have had so much trouble doing basic things like getting groceries, and even maintaining family relationships because I was unable to get my license back. I have two adult children who live in Boise and Missouri and would like to be able to see them on a more regular basis. I don't have the money to fly on my fixed income, so driving to visit them is my only option. I don't get to see them very often because of that.

At one point, I owed more than \$3,000 to the Baker County Justice Court for traffic fines and tried to get on a payment plan I could maintain. The court wanted me to pay \$50 a month and I did until my 2003 traumatic brain injury made it impossible to work any longer. I paid what I could but eventually couldn't make payments anymore with what I was receiving in SSI. I lost hope that I would ever get my license back.

When I contacted Oregon law Center, they helped me work out a more reasonable payment plan with the justice court and my holds were removed in 2020. Now the only thing left is for me to pay the reinstatement fee. In order to get my license reinstated, I will have to go to another nonprofit in Baker City in order to ask them to pay my reinstatement fee because I do not have the money. Without help from nonprofits, I would not be able to get my license back on my own. HB 2523 would help people like me.