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ADVANCING JUSTICE AND PUBLIC SAFETY SOLUTIONS

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April 14, 2023

Re: SB 164/HB 254 - Elimination of Driver's License Suspensions

Position: SUPPORT

To: Co-Chairman Phillip Pettus, Alabama House of Representatives

Dear Co-Chairman Pettus,

As a former US attorney, and a speaker for the Law Enforcement Action Partnership (LEAP), I support SB 164/HB 254 because I believe ending debt-based license suspensions would improve public safety and strengthen police-community trust.

LEAP is a nonprofit group of police, prosecutors, judges, and other criminal justice professionals who speak from firsthand experience. Our mission is to make communities safer by focusing law enforcement resources on the greatest threats to public safety, addressing the root causes of crime, and working toward healing police-community relations.

Across this country, more than 11 million people are impacted by driver's license suspensions for failing to pay traffic fines and fees or for missing a court date. Our state issues hundreds of citations for driving on a suspended or revoked license every day.

By suspending licenses for non-driving-related issues, our state is creating unnecessary burdens on public safety. Each time one of our officers arrests someone for driving on a suspended license, they spend time making the arrest, waiting for a tow truck, transporting the person to booking, and writing the report. This takes time from their shift, a waste of police resources that could have been spent confronting dangerous driving or investigating serious crime.

Driver's license suspensions can also directly impact officer safety. People are desperate to avoid going to jail, so if they get pulled over with a suspended license, they may try to flee the scene. [One survey](#) found that 17% of people with criminal justice debt committed crimes to get money to

**LawEnforcementActionPartnership.org**

*Formerly known as Law Enforcement Against Prohibition*

pay off their debt.

License suspensions also make roads less safe. Many individuals with suspended licenses continue to drive in order to provide for their families and pay off their debts. Since they are driving illegally, they are less likely to report traffic accidents and do not have insurance. When millions of people have to choose between obeying the law and keeping their job, we all lose.

Finally, this practice also unnecessarily erodes community trust in the police. When community members are breaking the law, they avoid the police and will not share information with us if they witness other crimes.

Now Alabama has the opportunity to share in the progress of 14 other states and D.C. on this issue. SB 164/HB 254 would end debt-based license suspensions. This effort has attracted bipartisan support. A similar federal bill has been endorsed by a coalition that includes the ACLU, the Major Cities Chiefs Association, the Fraternal Order of Police, and Americans for Tax Reform. We stand united in the fight to end this practice.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my experience in support of this bill.

Kenyen Brown  
Former US Attorney  
Southern District of Alabama  
Speaker, Law Enforcement Action Partnership