



RHODE ISLAND SUPREME COURT

Office of General Counsel

Licht Judicial Complex

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March 11, 2025

Via Electronic Mail (HouseJudiciary@rilegislature.gov)

Chairman Robert E. Craven, Sr.
House Committee on the Judiciary
Rhode Island State House
House Lounge
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

Re: House Bill #5931: An Act Relating to Motor and Other Vehicles – Suspension or Revocation of Licenses - Violations

Dear Chairman Craven:

I write on behalf of the Judiciary and the Rhode Island Traffic Tribunal (RITT) to respectfully express our concerns regarding House Bill #5931, scheduled to be heard this evening before the House Judiciary Committee. If enacted, this legislation would prohibit the Division of Motor Vehicles from suspending a person's license, after notice from the Courts, for failure to pay fines imposed for traffic and motor vehicle violations.

As part of its statutory authority, RITT is responsible for adjudicating traffic violations, and breathalyzer refusal matters. Individuals cited for these types of violations appear before the court, and as part of the resolution of these matters, are generally assessed a fine. If an individual is unable to pay a fine associated with a violation, a payment plan is set up by the court which allows for payment over time. At any time, the individual may seek modification of the payment plan if his or her financial circumstances change. If the individual fails to appear, or to pay the fine his or her licensee may be suspended until the individual appears before the court. Once the individual appears in court, a new payment plan is initiated and the individual's license is reinstated.

This legislation would reward an individual who fails to appear or take responsibility for speeding, other moving violation, or a breathalyzer refusal. A few years ago, the Judiciary supported legislation that now allows for a waiver or remittance of most court costs and fees. However, fines are not fees associated with the adjudicated misconduct; fines **are** the penalty for the misconduct. If passed this legislation would eliminate the very mechanism by which the courts

can enforce traffic and other violations. Lastly, given that fines go into the state's general fund, if passed this legislation would have a negative fiscal impact on the state.

For these reasons I ask the House Judiciary Committee to carefully consider the impact of this bill. Thank you for the opportunity to express the judiciary's concerns regarding this bill.

Sincerely,


Kathleen Kelly
General Counsel