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April 24, 2025

TESTIMONY OF THE OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC DEFENDER REGARDING:

House Bill No. 6211

ENTITLED, AN ACT RELATING TO MOTOR AND OTHER VEHICLES -- MOTOR VEHICLE OFFENSES

Chairman Craven and Members of the House Judiciary Committee:

The Office of the Public Defender has significant concerns with HB6211, which would require judges, when sentencing any person convicted of driving under the influence or refusal to submit to a chemical test, to prohibit operation of a motor vehicle that does not have an ignition interlock device (IID) installed for a minimum of six months.

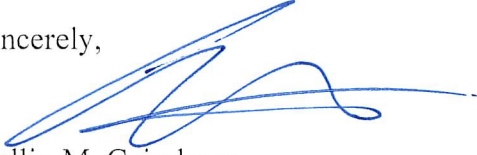
Our biggest concern is that the bill, as currently drafted, could disproportionately impact indigent individuals by exacerbating their financial hardships and potentially extending their license suspension. The installation cost, monthly lease, and maintenance and calibration fees for IIDs, particularly those with added camera systems, place an additional strain on individuals already struggling to meet basic needs. The average cost for an interlock system over a six-month period (the minimum period in this bill) is between \$900-1,100, in addition to the approximately \$1,800 in costs associated with a misdemeanor DUI conviction.

For an indigent defendant, assuming they own a vehicle, installing an IID could require saving money over time, effectively lengthening the period of license suspension to which they were sentenced. While we recognize that some period of license suspension is necessary in DUI and refusal cases, it is concerning whenever legislation would impact poor people—for whom maintaining employment is the most critical—more than others.

While the proposal of an Ignition Interlock System Fund is appreciated, we remain skeptical of its efficacy in alleviating the financial burden on indigent people. The proposed fund's ability to cover the costs of mandatory IID over the required period appears untenable. Additionally, we would anticipate a several months-long delay in the creation and implementation of rules and regulations for such a fund, leaving those indigent persons convicted of DUIs during this period unable to afford the extraordinary mandates of this bill. Further, the bill adds a mandatory fee for the Ignition Interlock System Fund, from which indigent defendants are not exempt.

In conclusion, while we appreciate the intent behind this bill and do not oppose the expanded use of IIDs as a matter of policy, we believe it presents significant challenges, particularly for indigent people whom we represent. Therefore, we would recommend that continued reliance on judicial discretion in sentencing be maintained and we urge the Committee to reconsider the provisions of HB6211.

Sincerely,



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