



## Ohio Senate

Senate Building  
Columbus, Ohio 43215  
614-466-5980 Phone

State Senator  
**Cecil Thomas**  
9th District

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**Joint Legislative Task Force on Department of Transportation Issues**  
**Senator Gayle Manning, Representative Cheryl Grossman, Co-Chairs**  
**License Plate Testimony**  
**October 7, 2015**

To Chairwomen Manning and Grossman and members of the task force, thank you for the opportunity to testify on license plate issues in the State of Ohio. As many of you know, I was a police officer in the City of Cincinnati for 27 years, as well as Executive Director of the Cincinnati Human Relations Commission and a member of the Cincinnati City Council. My experiences in these public service roles have reinforced my commitment to safety and informed my perspective on good law enforcement strategies. I hope this committee will consider my perspective as a former law enforcement officer in the urban core when deciding how to proceed with license plate requirements.

This committee will surely hear testimony detailing the financial cost of requiring two license plates. As legislators, the financial impact of any regulation should be an important consideration for us and there is no doubt this requirement has a large sticker price for the taxpayers of this state. I believe the financial cost alone is not worth the consequences of maintaining the front license plate requirement. However, I want to emphasize that there are important community-police relations components that should be the primary driver of this conversation.

Although this requirement provides law enforcement with an additional tool, there is no doubt that this law is enforced selectively. I would ask members of this committee to go outside on High Street and count the number of cars that drive by without a front plate. There are all different varieties of cars in operation on Ohio roads that are not in compliance with current law. It would be impossible to ticket every affluent citizen that drives a luxury car, soccer mom that drives a minivan, or historic vehicle owner that does not have a front plate on their car. Unfortunately, the perception exists in cities like Cincinnati and Cleveland that the only people that are ticketed for driving without a front plate are minorities who are profiled as criminals by an officer. This perception helps maintain the resentment and distrust between the community and police in our urban cores.

Law enforcement has contended that the front license plate requirement helps to identify motorists leaving the scene of an accident or crime. I can attest to the fact that there are other tools law enforcement has at its disposal that are more effective in this pursuit. I would also be remiss if I neglected to note that none of Ohio's neighbors require a front license plate to be displayed. Please consider these factors when evaluating the practicality of current law.

I hope that this task force will recommend the elimination the front license plate requirement or at least pursue a reasonable compromise that protects the public safety and makes strides toward improved police-community relations in our cities. There are existing bills that would address both of these issues. I am the sponsor of Senate Bill 202, which would make driving without a front license plate a secondary offense. *The Cincinnati Enquirer* ran an editorial in the aftermath of the shooting death of Samuel DuBose supporting the elimination of the front plate requirement. In fact, the editorial board criticized my bill for not going far enough, but opined the legislature should pass something. Put simply, I agree. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this issue. I will be happy to answer any questions committee members may have.