



5

Must-pass bills in 2020

1

House Bill 285 establishes a driver's license reinstatement fee reduction and waiver program for low-income Ohioans. The bill is based on the successful pilot program, which served nearly 77,000 Ohioans, helping them to get their driving privileges restored.

Issue: In Ohio, the state can suspend a person's driver's license for more than 30 reasons. Each year, more than one million Ohioans lose their driving privileges due to a suspension. To restore driving privileges, an individual must pay a reinstatement fee. The fees vary by suspension type and range from \$15 to \$650 per suspension. It is not uncommon for a person who has multiple suspensions to owe thousands of dollars in reinstatement fees.

Why it matters: Sixty-two percent of suspensions are for offenses unrelated to safe and responsible vehicle operations. Rather, they were due to issues like failure to pay child support, failure to show proof of insurance, or failure to appear in court or pay a court fine. The program only waives or reduces reinstatement fees—not fines or court costs related to the underlying reason for the suspension. Suspensions resulting from drug or alcohol offenses are not eligible.

Who it helps: HB285 helps low-income Ohioans who have had their license suspended who need to drive to work, school, and doctor appointments.

2

House Bill 263 removes barriers to employment by reforming occupational licensing. It requires licensing agencies to create new disqualifying criminal offense lists that only include offenses related to the duties and responsibilities of the licensed occupation. HB263 would also only allow licensing agencies to consider disqualifying offenses for five years after the date of conviction or the release from incarceration, whichever is most recent.

Issue: Ohio laws and rules have 850 references that limit job opportunities for Ohioans with criminal convictions who have already completed their sentences.

Why it matters: Approximately one in four Ohio jobs is restricted for Ohioans with criminal records. Jobs affected by these collateral sanctions pay an average of \$4,700 more per year and are growing at twice the rate of other jobs.

Who it helps: In Ohio, approximately one in six residents has a felony or misdemeanor conviction record. This bill would help Ohioans with non-violent offenses have greater employment and career opportunities after they have completed their sentences. This policy change will also help expand the workforce for employers who have jobs to fill. Ohioans who commit violent or sexually-oriented offense could still be excluded from licensing opportunities.

3

House Bill 111 requires school districts to transfer student records within five days of getting a request.

Issue: Often when children change schools, their records do not follow them in a timely manner. It makes sense that school records would be quickly transferred from one school to another when a child moves. However, for a variety of reasons, this often does not happen—and it is the child who suffers.

Why it matters: When teachers do not have the information they need, children, especially those with an Individualized Education Program (IEP), are not receiving the appropriate education and services that they need to succeed.

Who it helps: The most common causes of student transfers are residential moves related to parents' jobs or other financial instability. A 2010 Government Accountability Office study found that highly mobile students were disproportionately more likely to be poor or black. Another study found transfer rates higher for students living in poverty, homeless students, and children in the foster care system.

4

House Bill 443 and Senate Bill 254 require compliance audits of health plans to make sure they are following parity requirements. The legislation prohibits any treatment limitations for mental health and substance use disorder benefits that are not also applied to medical and surgical benefits.

Issue: The Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act requires equitable coverage of substance use disorder and mental health benefits in both the public and private health insurance markets. Although passed over a decade ago, many Ohioans are not even aware of parity requirements. Lack of enforcement has had a detrimental effect on Ohioans with mental health issues or substance use disorders who are trying to access care.

Why it matters: According to a recently released Milliman Research Report, Ohioans were five times more likely to utilize an out-of-network behavioral health facility than an out-of-network medical/surgical facility. Additionally, there have been instances where health plans have limited the amount of treatment people can receive or placed utilization barriers such as prior authorization requirements or step therapy protocols.

Who it helps: The legislation will help Ohioans seeking treatment for mental health or addiction.

5

Senate Bill 11 and House Bill 369 are also called the Ohio Fairness Act. These identical bills protect against employment discrimination, housing discrimination, and discrimination in accessing basic goods and services based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression.

Issue: In most of Ohio, it is still legal to discriminate against members of the LGBTQ community.

Why it matters: The Ohio Fairness Act adds sexual orientation and gender identity or expression to the laws that make discrimination illegal in Ohio. According to the Williams Institute, 11% of LGBTQ people in Ohio do not have employment compared to 5% of those who do not identify as LGBTQ and 33% of LGBTQ people are earning less than \$24,000 a year.

Who it helps: It helps us all. Without legal protections for all Ohioans, residents who want to live and work in Ohio are being left behind. Ohio is creating more vulnerable populations and needs to send a clear message that it wants all residents to have stable housing and employment.