



Representative Michael Dembrow

House District 45 (NE Portland, Maywood Park & Parkrose)

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H-487

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Chair Prozanski and Senate Judiciary Committee members,

HB 2986 provides a way for ex-offenders to break out of a vicious-circle and become productive citizens in our communities after they've served their time.

For many ex-offenders, the best route back into society is through a pre-apprenticeship or apprenticeship program. These programs get them the skills that they need and put them on track to employment.

But many ex-offenders are blocked from being part of an apprenticeship program because to be enrolled in a pre-apprenticeship or apprenticeship program, they've got to have a valid driver's license. They have not been able to have their license restored to them because they have outstanding traffic fines that they still need to pay. They cannot because they have no jobs. They've paid their time, but they can't pay their fines.

They could do the right thing and pay their fines if they could only complete their programs and get a job in a trade. But they can't do that because they don't have a driver's license. Hence the vicious circle.

HB 2986 allows us to break that circle. Thanks to some great, creative partnership between DMV, Corrections, Judiciary, and BOLI, we've worked out a straightforward, no-cost way for the court to reinstate a person's driving privileges as long as the person is enrolled in a certified pre-apprenticeship program or is registered as a certified apprentice. This provides a further incentive for the student or apprentice to work hard and be successful in their program. (If they leave the program, the license suspension will be reinstated.) The individual must begin making payments within six months of completing the program, or else the court will reissue the suspension.

Senators, passing this little bill into law will incentivize good decisions and good behavior, help build our skilled workforce, get more fines paid, and thereby bring much-needed money into our courts. It breaks down unnecessary bureaucratic silos and barriers, and it gets individuals back on track.

I urge an aye vote.