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Governor Baker Signs Bipartisan Legislation Reducing Barriers to Re-Entry for Individuals Convicted of Drug Offenses

Bill repeals automatic drivers’ license suspension and $500 reinstatement fee

BOSTON – Today, Governor Charlie Baker signed bipartisan legislation passed unanimously by both branches to ease the transition for those convicted of drug offenses to re-enter society, hold employment and care for their families by repealing the automatic suspension of drivers licenses and a subsequent $500 reinstatement fee for all drug convictions.

“As the Commonwealth takes important steps to battle substance abuse and reexamine our criminal justice system, I am pleased to sign legislation providing opportunities for those convicted of drug offenses and who have served their time to re-enter society, find and keep a job and support their families,” said Governor Charlie Baker. “Removing this significant barrier to re-entry reduces the prospects of recidivism as individuals continue treatment or recovery and gives them a better chance at getting back on their feet. I thank Senate President Rosenberg, Speaker DeLeo and their colleagues for their leadership and important attention to this necessary reform.”

The legislation, An Act relative to motor vehicle licenses suspension (Senate Bill 2021), provides certain exceptions for drug trafficking convictions and takes effect immediately, except as provided for in Section 7.

"We are proud to support this legislation that would ensure those who have paid their debts to society for drug offenses have the means to be productive citizens,
capable of supporting themselves and their loved ones," **said Lt. Governor Karyn Polito.** "I'm proud of our administration's efforts and collaboration with the legislature to counter opioid addiction, and ending the automatic license suspension is a reform that will help put people on a path that keeps them out of our criminal justice system."

“By the Governor signing this bill today Massachusetts takes an important step towards reforming our criminal justice system. This bill repeals an ineffective and unfair law that made it harder for those who have paid for their mistakes to re-enter society,” **said Senate President Stan Rosenberg (D-Amherst).** “Approximately 7,000 people had their license suspended last year due to a drug conviction even if that conviction had nothing to do with the operation of a motor vehicle. That’s 7,000 people who cannot drive to their jobs and miss court dates and rehabilitation meetings, making it harder for them to rejoin their families and their communities. Thank you to Governor Baker, Speaker DeLeo, and Senate Majority Leader Harriette Chandler for their leadership on this issue.”

“We must seize every opportunity possible to help residents reintegrate into society, find fulfilling jobs and support their families,” **said House Speaker Robert A. DeLeo (D-Winthrop).** “This legislation is an important part of that effort. I’m proud that this law also advances our efforts to help those battling addiction. I thank my colleagues in the Legislature, the Baker Administration and the individuals who bravely shared their stories.”

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