



AB 1685 (Bryan) – Vehicles: parking violations

SUMMARY

AB 1685 would establish a state-wide program that requires all local jurisdictions to create parking ticket relief programs for people experiencing homelessness. AB 1685 also sets forth uniform standards for ticket relief programs to operate, and establishes standards for reporting information to the state to collect valuable data on the effectiveness of these programs.

BACKGROUND

It is estimated that 568,000 people are experiencing homelessness in the United States – of that – 161,000 live in California. For many of these people, their vehicle is their last vestige of safety and stability. Their vehicles become their safe haven where they can shelter from rain or cold and store their possessions. And similar to the general public, a personal vehicle allows them to retain access to public services, appointments with case managers and doctors, and stay connected to their families. Additionally, vehicles serve as a critical tool for people to exit homelessness, retain gainful employment and income to support themselves and their families. According to the 2020 Greater Los Angeles Count, there were at least 18,904 people living in 11,124 vehicles on any given night. However, parking fines significantly burden this population while also threatening the loss of their vehicle, pushing them deeper into crisis, making it harder for them to exit homelessness, while providing little revenue for government.

PROBLEM

California traffic fines and fees are the highest in the country. The price of not paying your parking ticket in a timely manner is only exacerbated with additional fines, suspension of your registration, potentially having your vehicle towed (which comes with additional fees to recover your vehicle), and having your driver's license suspended. In April 2017, a California DMV report showed that 588,939 Californians lost their licenses because they could not pay or appear in court. For those on the brink of homelessness, the issue is all the more pressing; a 2019 report, *Towed into Debt*, outlined the massive barriers people in poverty face in both paying their tickets fines and in recovering their vehicle from a tow. This report found that a significant portion of these tows stem from unpaid parking tickets.

Over the past several years the state has passed a number of measures that have allowed the state to require local jurisdictions to create *ticket repayment installment plans* for low income drivers. However, data shows that even with installment plans, these debts are largely uncollectible and may drivers still lose access to their vehicles. For those people experiencing homelessness that are connected to a service provider, these providers often utilize public funds to pay off fines or recover vehicles from tow yards, diverting funding from paying for housing or services. At the local level, a number of cities have created programs that allow people experiencing homelessness to waive their ticket balances, thus helping them preserve access to their vehicle. But the majority of cities have no such programs and the programs that do exist are not consistent, creating a patchwork of eligibility requirements, barriers to participation, and availability of the service. This bill creates an opportunity create a pathway to ensure people experiencing homelessness are not pushed further into desperation through unnecessary confiscation of their vehicles, while also preserving both case managers time and public funds to focus on placing these individuals in the housing that ends their homelessness.

SOLUTION

AB 1685 builds on existing programs by creating a statewide solution that builds on programs of cities like Los Angeles and San Francisco that have led the way with the creation of programs to waive ticket balances for those experiencing homelessness. AB 1685 would create the mechanism in California for those experiencing homelessness to receive much needed relief. By creating a pathway to forgive these fees, California can give everyone a fair chance to thrive by not depleting the fragile resources of our most vulnerable residents.

SUPPORT

Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (Co-Sponsor)
Housing California (Co-Sponsor)
Corporation for Supportive Housing
Downtown Women's Center
John Burton Advocates for Youth
National Alliance to End Homelessness
Sycamores



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FOR MORE INFORMATION

Autumn McCreary | Legislative Director
Office of Assemblymember Isaac Bryan
(916) 319-2054
Autumn.McCreary@asm.ca.gov