

## Senate Floor Debate

### **SB2021 (Chapter 64 of 2016) - Senate Bills in Third Reading - An Act relative to motor vehicle license suspension**

#### **Rep. Straus, William (D)**

This bill is a long time coming. It restores a separation between criminal justice and how the eligibility for a driver's license is handled. The law since 1989 has linked federal funds to a statute that says an unrelated conviction for a drug offense results in a five year loss of a driver's license. It is not part of the disposition in the criminal case. We expect them to come to appointments and get a job. We have inadvertently put a roadblock in their way and added to recidivism. It is time to end this connection. Nothing we do today will limit the discretion of a criminal case to stop a driver's license. If a case involved operating the under the influence, the license can certainly be revoked. We are not tying the hands of the criminal justice system. The MA District Attorneys' Association is supportive of this bill. The Attorney General herself is in favor of it as well. I hope that the members will support this bill.

#### **Rep. Carvalho, Evandro (D)**

Today, we have a chance to change the course of criminal justice. We have come a long way since the early days of the War on Drugs, which has led to mass incarceration and criminalization of addiction. In the last few decades, we have locked up more people than ever before. There is a statewide increase in heroin deaths which proves that we need rehabilitation and integration. License suspension is one of the biggest challenges to reentry. It drives the cycle. Automatic license suspension has pushed thousands of people away from work, taking kids to school and rebuilding their lives. As a law student in Roxbury I saw this first hand. As a state legislator, I hear from young people with challenges constantly. I know a bright young man who lost his driver's license and has trouble getting to classes and picking up his daughter. He is determined to make his parents proud. That is the crux of this legislation. He deserves a fair shot and has too much potential to be squandered. I hope that you will all support this bill.