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**Judiciary Committee**

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**HB 1033**

**Title:** An act relating to clarifying the restrictions concerning occupational licenses.

**Brief Description:** Clarifying the restrictions concerning occupational licenses.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Kirby, Cooper, Sullivan and Lantz.

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Removes the requirement that some applicants for an occupational driver's license must enter into a payment plan for unpaid fines.
- Explicitly states that an occupational license issued to a person with unpaid fines is to be used by the person to get to and from work in order to pay off those fines.

**Hearing Date:** 1/17/03

**Staff:** Bill Perry (786-7123).

**Background:**

Under prescribed circumstances, a person whose driver's license has been suspended or revoked may get an "occupational" license. Such a license is for the purpose of allowing the person to work, or in some instances to get training or to get treatment for substance abuse.

The authority to drive under such a license is limited to driving that is directly related to employment, training or treatment. The license must be accompanied by specific detailed restrictions on the hours of the day when driving is allowed and by a general description of the permitted routes for traveling to and from work or treatment. An occupational license is good for either the length of the suspension or revocation, or for two years, whichever is shorter.

One main category of persons who may apply for an occupational license is drivers who have had their licenses suspended by the department of licensing (DOL) for one of three specified reasons. These reasons include:

- failure to pay a traffic ticket; or
- driving without insurance; or

- committing multiple driving offenses with a frequency that indicates a disrespect for traffic laws or a disregard for the safety of others.

A person who has had his or her license suspended for one of these reasons may apply to the DOL for an occupational license if he or she:

- is in an apprenticeship or training program that requires a license; or
- has applied for such a program (in which case an occupational license will be good for only 14 days); or
- is enrolled in a WorkFirst program that requires a license; or
- is undergoing substance abuse treatment or attending substance abuse meetings and does not have transit services available to get to and from the treatment or meetings.

In addition, the applicant must meet certain requirements, including having insurance coverage or otherwise showing proof of financial responsibility.

If the reason for the loss of license was failure to pay a fine, then the applicant must also enter into a payment plan with the court in order for the DOL to issue an occupational license. Some otherwise qualified applicants have apparently been unable to get occupational licenses solely because some courts do not have payment plans.

**Summary of Bill:**

A person who has lost his or her driver's license because of unpaid fines no longer need enter into a plan for payment of those fines when applying for an occupational license.

An express provision is added to the occupational driver's license law stating that:

- the issuance of an occupational license does not affect the underlying suspension or revocation; and
- the purpose of the occupational license is to allow a driver to get to and from work and to pay off any outstanding fines where the failure to pay those fines was the reason for the suspension or revocation of the driver's license.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Effective Date:** Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.