



**For Immediate Release**

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## **62-B District Court Launches On the Road Program to Promote Safer Roads with Licensed Drivers**

*Program Encourages Individuals to Get a Valid License and Avoid Criminal Conviction*

**Kentwood, Michigan, Jan. 24, 2022** – The City of Kentwood’s 62-B District Court has launched On the Road, a new program that encourages individuals with certain license-related charges to get back behind the wheel with a valid license and potentially avoid a criminal conviction, resulting in more licensed drivers and safer roads.

Launched in late 2021, On the Road eliminates hurdles for individuals who have been charged by the City with driving unlicensed or with a suspended, revoked or denied license. The program aims to help community members avoid the repeated suspensions that can result from license-related convictions and keep them from appearing on their permanent criminal record. This helps drivers avoid Secretary of State penalties as well as the barriers that criminal convictions can lead to in terms of employment eligibility, housing and education.

“Our goal is to create incentives for people in these situations to become licensed drivers, which will ultimately result in safer roads for our community,” 62-B District Court Judge Amanda Sterkenburg said. “Often, we see defendants who are close to getting their license for the first time but are unable to overcome certain licensure hurdles or who are unaware their license is suspended because of an unpaid ticket. The additional charges put more distance between them and valid-license privileges.”

“This program gives individuals the opportunity to conform their conduct to the law without a criminal conviction and streamline the process for them to become a licensed driver.”

State law was amended last year to create a presumption that these offenses should not be punished with jail time. Individuals are now frequently required to pay fines and complete community service, which can be difficult for individuals who do not have a driver’s license and another form of transportation. Failing to complete the requirements can result in additional penalties including up to 93 days in jail, probation, fines of up to \$500 plus court costs, and a misdemeanor conviction on their permanent criminal record.

With On the Road, eligible individuals can avoid this difficult situation and sanctions if they successfully complete the program.

The court’s judge will determine if a person is eligible for the program during arraignment. However, individuals whose driver’s license has been revoked due to drug or alcohol convictions, Friend of the Court, or immigration status may be ineligible.

If an individual does qualify, they must agree to accept responsibility for a civil infraction and pay a fine during a review hearing scheduled up to four months later. Leading up to the review hearing, a person must fulfill obligations to become a licensed driver. This may include paying all tickets, removing all suspensions

from their Secretary of State record, paying all fees, completing a defensive driving course and passing their road or written driving test.

For more information about On the Road, visit [kentwood.us/OTR](http://kentwood.us/OTR) or contact Court Administrator Michele White at 616.554.0715 or [whitem@kentwood.us](mailto:whitem@kentwood.us).

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