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April 26, 2021

TO: House Transportation Committee Members

FR: Sergeant Jeremy Conkling, APDEA President

RE: HB 166

Representative Stutes, Representative Wool, and Committee Members,

My name is Sergeant Jeremy Conkling, and I am the President of the Anchorage Police Department Employees Association (APDEA). I represent over 570 members of the Anchorage Police Department and I write to you to communicate our opposition to HB 166.

The removal of front license plates would create significant officer safety and investigatory issues for police officers. I've listed the most problematic ones below:

- Traffic Officers routinely use the front license plate to identify a vehicle which they must turn around to stop. For example, a speeding vehicle passes by and you can get at least part of the plate, then use that information to make sure you have the correct vehicle when you catch back up.
  - Traffic officers looking for REDDI (Report Every Dangerous Driver Immediately) vehicles can usually read the front plate of an approaching vehicle but cannot not turn to see the rear plate after a vehicle passes.
  - Officers have received notifications from APSIN on a stolen vehicle by running the front plate through the APSIN database, then learn that the rear plate had been swapped out with a plate not yet reported as stolen. This means that if they had run only the rear plate, they would never have known the vehicle was stolen.
  - It is common for people to steal plates from similar vehicles and use them for nefarious purposes. A vehicle having one plate becomes suspicious to officers, leading to further investigation. This commonly results in identification of a crime directly or a notification to citizens that they are missing a plate, causing them to then report the plate as missing or stolen.
  - In the last 24 months the Fatality Investigators have had 4 cases in which a front plate has provided crucial information which is directly credited with solving cases. (APD Cases 19-29176, 20-5511, 20-29995, 21-148)
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- Traffic cameras at intersections emphasize vehicles on approach, meaning a front plate is more likely to be recognized whereas a rear plate is not.
  - Having identifying information on the front and back doubles our chances of properly identifying a suspect vehicle. I worry about the additional hinderance potentially leading to missed identifications or misidentifications.
  - The increased proliferation of video in public and private places amplifies the possibility of identifying suspect vehicles. Removing a plate decreases the potential identification success rate by 50%.

I strongly feel the potential cost saving is far outweighed by the decrease in efficiency and effectiveness of public safety, and the increased danger to our police officers.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Conkling', is written over a faint, stylized outline of a police officer's uniform.

Sergeant Jeremy Conkling  
APDEA President