



8/27/2026

Friend,

This morning, a [letter to the editor in the Tribune Review](#) brought attention to [my DUI history](#). For those close to me and those who have come to know me over these last months, the story is one they've heard; now, I'd like to take this opportunity to share it with everyone.

In 2016, toward the end of my first semester at Edinboro University, I was pulled over while driving back to my dorm from a local bar. I was charged with a DUI and some months later, in 2017, pled guilty and subsequently completed my sentence.

On that night in 2016, as I sat in the police station, I knew there was an overarching problem that I had been ignoring for some time. The following day, I went to a local AA meeting. I'd like to say that I didn't belong there, but it soon became apparent that I did. I had a dependency and needed to overcome it.

I proceeded to seek, attend, and complete on my own volition an outpatient rehab program to help with my alcohol dependency. I also continued going to AA for several months. I am proud to say that there are many personal challenges I have overcome in my life and am better for them.

During this time, I also put myself through college while working evening and weekend jobs. I majored in English with a minor in Political Science. I served for two consecutive years as the President of our chapter of the National Society of Leadership & Success. I was a student delegate for Model UN and Model NATO. I tutored in the Writing Center during my junior and senior years, while also serving as Editor and eventually Executive Editor of our university's art and literature magazine. I even made dean's list.

None of these things, even college, seemed possible to me at one point in my life.

After college, I worked at a group home for foster placement and adjudicated youths. I oversaw many of their counseling groups, including for drug and alcohol treatment. Later, I became a sexual abuse and domestic violence counselor for a number of years, focusing on treatment for children, teens, LGBTQIA+, and IDD/Autism, many of whom also struggled with chemical dependency. I am incredibly proud of so many of my past clients for the improvements they made in their lives, because I know how difficult those hurdles can be to overcome.

In August of 2024, I was in a car accident. My flip-flop caught on my accelerator as I approached a bend and I lost control of the car, hitting a ditch and fishtailing through a porch, eventually coming to stop in some bushes. Thankfully, no one was harmed. This seemed to be a fairly straightforward

accident—until one of the responding officers learned that I have a medical marijuana card and stated that this would be automatically counted as a DUI.

Per Pennsylvania state law, any amount of marijuana in your system is grounds for a DUI without need to prove impairment ([75 Pa. C.S. § 3802\(d\)\(1\)](#)), whether you have a medical card or not and regardless of when you last partook.

After extensive litigation, I was ultimately charged under the “[per se marijuana law](#)” and—as the law is written—had no choice but to plead guilty earlier this year.

While I understand the concerns people may have with a candidate having a criminal record, that alone does not reflect their current life or abilities to effectively lead. In fact, many people in our district, from our friends and family to community leaders and elected officials, have found themselves in similar legal situations.

While I am open with my recovery story and experiences, I ask you to remember that not everyone is; many people in our community are silently experiencing similar struggles and privately dealing with the stigmas that come with them. People that need compassion and support, not judgment and punishment. Stigmas that need to be abolished, not reinforced.

To me, leadership means owning your mistakes and learning from them. It means growing and doing better not only for yourself, but for everyone around you. It means leading by example. I have dedicated my adult life to helping people because I know what it’s like to need a little help. I will always continue doing that.

I appreciate your time in reading this. If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to my campaign.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rob Francis', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Rob Francis
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