



ADVOCATES  
FOR HIGHWAY  
& AUTO SAFETY

July 3, 2019

The Honorable J.B. Pritzker  
Governor of Illinois  
Office of the Governor  
207 State House  
Springfield, Illinois 62706

Dear Governor Pritzker:

Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety (Advocates), an alliance of consumer, safety, medical and public health groups, and insurance companies working together to pass highway and auto safety laws that prevent crashes, save lives, reduce injuries, and contain costs, urges you to sign into law Senate Bill (SB) 86. This legislation will improve safety on Illinois roads by broadening the current prohibition on drivers from using wireless communication devices to read, write or send text messages while operating a motor vehicle to include viewing non-navigational video and imagery and the expanded uses of portable electronic devices that have emerged. Considering the prevalence of distracted driving crashes, this legislation is critical, responsive and timely.

In 2017, 1,097 people were killed on Illinois roads, marking the largest number of annual traffic deaths in a decade (National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA)). Wireless communication device distraction is a serious issue contributing to crashes and deaths. According to the NHTSA, the percentage of drivers visibly manipulating hand-held devices while driving increased by 250 percent between 2009 and 2016. Additionally, a survey performed by Nationwide Insurance found four out of ten respondents claimed to have been hit or nearly hit due to a distracted driver. The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) recently released a roadside survey that found manipulation of devices while driving is up 57 percent over the prior 2014 survey. More can and should be done to eradicate driver distraction.

As wireless communication technology has developed from cellphones to smart phones, which are in actuality miniature computers, and the range of electronic communication platforms has significantly broadened to include apps, cameras, social media, gaming, etc., laws curbing driver distraction must be updated to keep pace with the technology and ensuing distraction. SB 86 will help prevent drivers taking their eyes off the road and their mind off the task of driving.

Distracted driving not only results in crashes, deaths and injuries, but it also unnecessarily expends taxpayer dollars. Crashes in which at least one driver was identified as being distracted cost \$40 billion annually (NHTSA). Nationally, distracted driver crashes cost businesses \$8.2 billion in 2013 (Network of Employers for Traffic Safety, 2016). The annual economic costs of all crashes in Illinois are nearly \$10.9 billion (NHTSA).

Each distracted driving death and serious injury irrevocably changes the lives of families and communities in Illinois and across the nation. We urge you to sign SB 86, a critical measure to curb dangerous and deadly distracted driving.

Sincerely,

Catherine Chase  
President