



January 23, 2021

The Honorable Daniel R. Benson, Chair  
The Honorable Yvonne Lopez, Vice Chair  
Assembly Transportation and Independent Authorities Committee  
State House Annex  
Trenton, New Jersey 08625

Dear Chairperson Benson and Vice Chairperson Lopez:

Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety (Advocates), a coalition of consumer, safety, public health, law enforcement and medical groups, and insurance companies and organizations working together to pass highway and auto safety laws that prevent needless crashes, deaths and injuries and contain costs, supports enactment of Assembly Bill (A) 1354/Senate Bill (S) 1963. This legislation would improve the current graduated driver licensing (GDL) law for novice drivers by requiring supervised driving hours and extending the examination and special learner's permit holding period for novice teen and young adult drivers.

Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for teens in the United States.<sup>i</sup> Per mile driven, drivers aged 16 to 19 are three times more likely than drivers aged 20 and older to be in a fatal crash.<sup>ii</sup> According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), teens are more likely than older drivers to misjudge dangerous situations or not be able to recognize hazardous situations. Teens tend to speed, follow too closely, and underestimate speed and stopping distances. Over the ten-year period of 2010 through 2019, there were 605 young drivers, under the age of 21, involved in fatal crashes in New Jersey, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). Moreover, compared with other age groups, teens and young adults have lower rates of seat belt use.

New Jersey is one of only three states (AR, MS) without any requirement for novice drivers to complete behind-the-wheel driver training with an adult licensed driver during the examination permit phase. This legislation would close this dangerous safety gap in the GDL law by requiring novice drivers to complete 50 hours of supervised driver training, 10 hours of which must be at night, prior to obtaining a probationary driver license. The bill will also increase the examination permit holding period from six months to one year. Extending this period, will provide novice teen and young adult drivers with more time to gain skills and experience while aided by an adult before allowing them to advance to a probationary driver license and drive alone. Extending the holding period to between nine months to a year has been found to result in a 21 percent reduction in fatal crash rates.<sup>iii</sup>

Compelling research shows that comprehensive GDL laws, which include a supervised driving requirement, reduce teen crashes and save lives. According to a national study conducted by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS), a supervised driving requirement of 40 hours was associated with a 10 percent lower rate of insurance collision claims among 16 and 17 year-old drivers.<sup>iv</sup> The IIHS GDL Crash Reduction Calculator estimates that if New Jersey adds a provision for 50 hours of supervised driving to its current GDL law, fatal crashes would be reduced by three percent and collision claims by 13 percent.<sup>v</sup>

Graduated driver licensing laws not only save lives by preventing crashes involving young drivers, they also save states money by reducing crash related costs. The NHTSA estimates the annual economic cost of police-reported crashes involving drivers between 15 and 20 years old is \$40.8 billion.<sup>vi</sup> In New Jersey, all motor vehicle crashes cost the state nearly \$13 billion annually.<sup>vii</sup>

Furthermore, the American public overwhelmingly supports comprehensive GDL programs. A survey conducted by the IIHS shows that parents favor GDL laws that are as strict as or even stricter than currently exist in any state. Additionally, almost three quarters (74 percent) of teens approve of a comprehensive law that

incorporates the key elements of GDL programs, including supervised driving hours, according to a survey by the Allstate Foundation.

Unfortunately, 559 people were killed on New Jersey roads in 2019, and early estimates show that fatalities increased to 589 in 2020. Improving teen and young adult driver safety will make the roads safer for all and is a critical step to reducing the unacceptable and preventable death and injury toll. Advocates urges you to advance A. 1354/S. 1963.

Sincerely,



Catherine Chase  
President

cc: Assembly Transportation and Independent Authorities Committee Members

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<sup>i</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), National Center for Injury Prevention and Control (NCIPC). WISQARS (Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System). U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; July 2020. Available at <https://www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/index.html>. Accessed 1 October 2020.

<sup>ii</sup> Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS). Fatality facts: Teenagers 2017. <http://www.iihs.org/iihs/topics/t/teenagers/fatalityfacts/teenagers>.

<sup>iii</sup> Masten, S.V., Fodd, R.D., Marshall, S.W., Graduated driver licensing program component calibrations and their association with fatal crash involvement, *Accident Analysis & Prevention*, V. 57, Aug. 2013, pp. 105-113.

<sup>iv</sup> Trepel, Rebecca E. *Graduated Driver Licensing Laws and Insurance Collision Claim Frequencies of Teenage Driver.*, IIHS, November 2009.

<sup>v</sup> IIHS GDL Crash Reduction Calculator available at: <https://www.iihs.org/topics/teenagers/gdl-calculator>

<sup>vi</sup> NHTSA 2015.

<sup>vii</sup> NHTSA 2015.