



ADVOCATES
FOR HIGHWAY
& AUTO SAFETY

February 12, 2021

The Honorable Steve Lathrop, Chair
The Honorable Patty Pansing-Brooks, Vice Chair
Judiciary Committee
Nebraska Legislature
Post Office Box 94604
Lincoln, Nebraska 68509

Dear Chairperson Lathrop and Vice Chairperson Pansing-Brooks:

Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety (Advocates), an alliance of consumer, safety, medical, public health and law enforcement groups, and insurance companies working together to pass highway and auto safety laws that prevent crashes, save lives, reduce injuries, and contain costs, opposes Legislative Bill (LB) 271 to weaken Nebraska's all-offender ignition interlock device (IID) law. We urge you to reject this measure which would create a gap in the current law, diminish the effectiveness of the state's IID program, and risk the safety of road users in Nebraska.

Drunk driving is a deadly and costly threat to Nebraska families. In 2019, 58 people were needlessly killed in alcohol-involved crashes, accounting for 23 percent of all traffic fatalities in the state (National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA)). Overall traffic fatalities rose eight percent in the state in 2019 (248 people killed), even as national data noted a two percent decrease in the number of traffic fatalities (NHTSA). Moreover, traffic fatalities cost the state nearly \$1.3 billion each year (NHTSA).

Information from Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) on the effectiveness of Nebraska's IID program notes that over the twelve-year period from December 1, 2006 to December 31, 2018, IIDs have prevented 34,506 attempts to drive drunk in the state. In 2018 alone, IIDs prevented 3,873 vehicle starts by drivers who had been drinking in Nebraska. LB 271 would weaken the IID law by allowing participation in a 24/7 sobriety program and use of a 24/7 sobriety program driving permit as an alternative to the IID requirement. This change would not prevent an offender from getting behind the wheel and driving drunk, which the IID technology requirement does, and therefore fails to safeguard the offender and all other road users.

Each day, nearly 30 people are killed in drunk driving crashes on average (NHTSA). In 2019, an average of one alcohol impaired driving fatality occurred nearly every 50 minutes in America resulting in a total of 10,142 deaths (NHTSA). According to MADD, one in three people will be involved in a drunk driving crash in their lifetime. These tragic, preventable crashes also create a financial burden of \$44 billion in economic costs and \$201 billion in comprehensive costs to society (NHTSA).

Recent national data finds that in 2020, even as the traffic volume decreased, dangerous driving behaviors including impaired driving increased leading to a steep uptick in the traffic fatality rate. According to early data from the Nebraska Department of Transportation Highway Safety Office, this deadly trend was documented in Nebraska as well. Traffic safety improvements are urgently needed, not the weakening of a proven traffic safety law, especially at a time when emergency rooms and hospitals are already overly burdened. Advocates urges you to oppose LB 271 and retain Nebraska's lifesaving all-offender IID law. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Catherine Chase, President

cc: Members of the Judiciary Committee