



ADVOCATES  
FOR HIGHWAY  
& AUTO SAFETY

February 17, 2021

The Honorable Chris Murphy, Chair  
The Honorable John Richard C. King, First Vice Chair  
The Honorable Neal A. Collins, Second Vice Chair  
House Judiciary Committee  
South Carolina Legislature  
1105 Pendleton Street  
Columbia, South Carolina 29201

Dear Chairperson Murphy, Vice Chairperson King and Vice Chairperson Collins:

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, supports House Bill (HB) 3008/Senate Bill (SB) 28 to require the use of ignition interlock devices (IIDs) by all convicted drunk drivers, including first time offenders. We urge you to advance this measure and join the 34 states and Washington, DC that have made their streets and highways safer by enacting an all-offender IID law.

Drunk driving is a deadly and costly threat to South Carolina families. In 2019, 285 people were needlessly killed in drunk driving crashes on South Carolina roads, accounting for 28 percent of all traffic fatalities (National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA)). Moreover, traffic fatalities cost the state over \$4 billion each year (NHTSA). Clearly, this is a serious issue on South Carolina roads which requires urgent attention and the effective solution of an all-offender IID law.

Under current law in South Carolina, ignition interlocks are reserved for repeat offenders and for first offenders with a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) of .15 percent or greater. Information from Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) on the effectiveness of IIDs in South Carolina notes that over the twelve-year period from December 1, 2006 to December 31, 2018, IIDs prevented 8,725 attempts to drive drunk in the state including 1,743 attempts in 2018 alone. Expanding the law to include all first time offenders would improve the effectiveness of the IID program and help prevent drunk driving.

States that have adopted IID laws for all offenders are saving lives, reducing injuries and preventing drunk driving recidivism. For example, Arizona, Oregon, New Mexico and Louisiana have all experienced dramatic decreases of more than 30 percent in drunk driving deaths after enacting an all-offender IID law (MADD). In addition, when West Virginia adopted its IID program, recidivism was reduced by 77 percent among first-time offenders.<sup>i</sup>

A common misconception is that most people who are convicted of their first drunk driving offense are social drinkers who made a one-time mistake. On average, a person arrested for impaired driving has driven drunk approximately 87 other times (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)). According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), each day, people drive drunk almost 300,000 times, but fewer than 4,000 are arrested. The CDC reports that when IIDs are installed, there is about a 70 percent reduction in arrest rates for impaired driving. Moreover, research shows that 50 to 75 percent of convicted drunk drivers continue to drive on a suspended license.<sup>ii</sup>

Almost every 90 seconds, a person is injured in a drunk driving crash in this country. In 2019, an average of one alcohol impaired driving fatality occurred every 52 minutes in the U.S. 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).

The American public strongly agrees that the use of IIDs is needed to address this public health crisis. Nearly eight in ten Americans support requiring ignition interlocks for all convicted DUI offenders, even if it's their first conviction.<sup>iii</sup> Furthermore, 82 percent of offenders themselves believe the IID was effective in preventing them from driving after drinking.<sup>iv</sup>

Advocates urges you to support and advance HB 3008/SB 28 to require this commonsense, lifesaving law to curb drunk driving. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Catherine Chase  
President

cc: Members of the House Judiciary Committee

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<sup>i</sup> Tippetts, A. Scott and Robert Voas. *The Effectiveness of the West Virginia Interlock Program*. Journal of Traffic Medicine 26 (1-2) (1998): 19-24.

<sup>ii</sup> Peck, R.C., Wilson, R. J., and Sutton, "Driver license strategies for controlling the persistent DUI offender, *Strategies for Dealing with the intent Drinking Driver*." Transportation Research Board, Transportation Research Circular (1995) No. 437.

<sup>iii</sup> Caution Ahead: New Year's Ranks As Deadliest Day On US Roads, Dec. 26, 2012, AAA article available at <http://newsroom.aaa.com/tag/ignition-interlock-devices>.

<sup>iv</sup> Morse, BJ and DS Elliott. Hamilton County Drinking and Driving Study: 30 Month Report. Boulder, Colorado: University of Colorado, 1990.