



ADVOCATES
FOR HIGHWAY
& AUTO SAFETY

March 24, 2021

The Honorable Jerry Petrowski, Chair
The Honorable Robert L. Cowles, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Transportation and Local Government
Wisconsin State Legislature
State Capitol
Madison, Wisconsin 53707

Dear Chairperson Petrowski and Vice Chairperson Cowles:

Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety (Advocates), an alliance of consumer, safety, law enforcement, medical and public health groups, and insurance companies working together to pass highway and auto safety laws that prevent crashes, save lives and reduce costs, urges you to upgrade Senate Bill (SB) 15. This measure will lower the age of entry into the state's graduated driver licensing (GDL) law from 15.5 to 15 years. We urge you to retain or improve upon the minimum age of entry for a learner's permit, while retaining the amendment to increase the requirement for supervised driving from 30 to 50 hours. These actions will improve the safety of novice teen drivers and all who share Wisconsin roads with them.

American teenagers drive less than all but the oldest drivers, yet their number of crashes and crash deaths are disproportionately high.ⁱ Per mile driven, even older drivers aged 16 to 19 are three times more likely than drivers aged 20 and older to be in a fatal crash.ⁱⁱ 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. Moreover, compared with other age groups, teens have the lowest rate of seat belt use. In addition to preventing fatalities and injuries, GDL laws save states money. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) estimates the national economic cost of police-reported crashes involving drivers between 15 and 20 years old is \$40.8 billion. In Wisconsin, all motor vehicle crashes cost the state more than \$4.5 billion annually (NHTSA).

Based on research, the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) has identified the current best practices in the United States for novice drivers to include a minimum permit age of 16 and a minimum intermediate license age of 17. Delaying the minimum age for obtaining a learner's permit was associated with lower fatal crash rates for 15 to 17 year olds combined, and a one year delay (e.g., from age 15 to 16) reduced the fatal crash rate by 13 percent.

According to a national study conducted by 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.ⁱⁱⁱ The IIHS GDL Crash Reduction Calculator estimates that if Wisconsin increases its requirement for supervised driving from 30 to 50 hours, fatal crashes and collision claims would both decrease if all other GDL provisions remain the same.^{iv} Unfortunately, the GDL calculator finds that simultaneously rolling back the age of entry from 15.5 to 15 years would result in an overall estimate of a six percent increase in fatal crashes.^v

Given the proven benefits of strong GDL programs, it is unsurprising that the American public is overwhelmingly supportive. An IIHS survey found that parents favor GDL laws that are as strict as or even stricter than currently exist in any state.^{vi} And, teens agree. Almost three quarters (74 percent) of teens

approve of a comprehensive law that incorporates the key elements of GDL including nighttime and passenger restrictions.^{vii}

Over the ten year period of 2010 to 2019, 5,760 people died on Wisconsin roads (NHTSA). Early estimates for the first three quarters of 2020 show that traffic fatalities and the traffic fatality rate have increased across the nation (NHTSA) due to an increase in dangerous and reckless driving. Rather than add provisions to both weaken and improve the state's GDL law as SB 15 would, we urge you to only advance measures to protect road users and keep them out of emergency rooms and hospitals as well as curb the expenditure of taxpayer dollars.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Catherine Chase
President

cc: Senate Committee on Transportation and Local Government Members

ⁱ Insurance Institute for Highway Safety. 2013. [Unpublished analysis of 2008 data from the U.S. Department of Transportation's National Household Travel Survey, General Estimates System, and Fatality Analysis Reporting System].

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

ⁱⁱⁱ Trempel, Rebecca E. *Graduated Driver Licensing Laws and Insurance Collision Claim Frequencies of Teenage Driver.*, IIHS, November 2009.

^{iv} IIHS GDL Crash Reduction Calculator available at: <https://www.iihs.org/topics/teenagers/gdl-calculator>

^v Id.

^{vi} IIHS, Status Report, Vol. 45, No. 7, August 3, 2010, *Parents favor strict rules for teen drivers and higher licensing age*. Available at: <http://bit.ly/1SQweGI>.

^{vii} Williams, AF, op. cit.