



ADVOCATES
FOR HIGHWAY
& AUTO SAFETY

March 1, 2022

The Honorable Laura Friedman, Chair
The Honorable Vince Fong, Vice Chair
Assembly Committee on Transportation
California State Legislature
1020 N Street, Room 112
Sacramento, California 95814

Dear Chair Friedman and Vice Chair Fong:

Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety (Advocates), an alliance of consumer, safety, medical, law enforcement and public health groups, and insurance companies working together to pass highway and auto safety laws that prevent crashes, save lives, reduce injuries and curb costs, supports enactment of Assembly Bill (AB) 2388. This legislation will improve the current graduated driver licensing (GDL) law for novice teen drivers by requiring participation in the state's program by older teen and young adult novice drivers up to age 21. California law only covers teenagers up to age 18, leaving other at-risk young novice drivers, and all those who share the roads with them, unnecessarily exposed to a high risk of preventable crashes.

Motor vehicle crashes are a leading killer of teens in California as well as across the United States.ⁱ On average, more than six teens were killed in the United States each day of 2019 as a result of motor vehicle crashes.ⁱⁱ Four thousand three hundred fifty-six (4,356) people were killed in crashes involving young drivers (aged 15 - 20) in 2019; 1,603 were young drivers and 880 were passengers of young drivers. The remaining 1,873 victims were non-occupants and the occupants of the other vehicles involved in crashes with young drivers.ⁱⁱⁱ Additionally, 205,000 young drivers were injured in motor vehicle crashes in 2019.^{iv} The estimated economic cost of police-reported crashes involving young drivers between 15 and 20 years old was \$40.8 billion (2002).^v When adjusted for inflation only, these costs amount to \$60 billion in 2020 dollars.^{vi}

Unfortunately, this preventable toll is worsening. New data from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) noted that traffic fatalities among ages 16 – 24 increased 15 percent in 2020 over 2019. In comparison, the overall increase in traffic fatalities in 2020 was 7.2 percent, less than half of that experienced by the teen and young adult age group.^{vii} Speeding, lack of seat belt use and impaired driving have been noted as the leading contributors to consecutive increases in traffic fatalities over the past couple of years. Among teens surveyed in 2019 for risky driving behaviors, 43 percent reported not always wearing a seat belt, 39 percent reported texting or emailing while driving and 17 percent had ridden at least once during the previous month with a driver who had been drinking alcohol.^{viii}

AB 2388 is timely legislation to help curb traffic fatalities as a significant number of teens today are delaying obtaining a driver's license and, as a consequence, are not benefitting from GDL programs according to research by the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia Center for Injury Research and Prevention and the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety. This research found that, "only 44 percent of respondents reported that they obtained a driver's license within 12 months of the minimum age for licensing in their state, and only 54 percent reported that they obtained a license before their 18th birthday."^{ix}

Aging out of GDL is a problem because drivers who begin the licensing process at age 18, 19 or 20 still have a high crash risk due to inexperience and brain development.^x As a result, older teen novice drivers are missing out on, yet still very much need, the safety benefits of GDL programs.^{xi} A recent study showed that

while GDL programs have likely contributed to a significant decline in teen driver crashes over the decade of 2005 – 2014, the improvements are not as strong for 18 – 20 year olds who have aged out of GDL.^{xii}

Additionally, GDL laws save states money by reducing crashes. In California, all motor vehicle crashes cost the state more than \$24 billion annually, when adjusted for inflation.^{xiii} AB 2388 will help curb the preventable, related costs.

The American public overwhelmingly supports GDL programs. According to a survey by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS), parents favor GDL laws that are as strict as or even stricter than currently exist in any state. They also approve of older ages for licensure; in fact, 64 percent chose age 18 or older for a full license.^{xiv} And, almost three quarters (74 percent) of teens approve of a comprehensive law that incorporates the key elements of GDL including nighttime and passenger restrictions.^{xv}

Teens delaying licensing has resulted in an unintended loophole that needs to be closed by including older teen and young adult novice drivers in the GDL program. We commend you for considering this measure and urge the Committee to swiftly advance AB 2388.

Sincerely,

Catherine Chase
President

ⁱ Centers for Disease Control And Prevention (CDC), Teen Driver: Fact Sheet, citing CDC. Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System (WISQARS) [Online]. (2014). National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, CDC (producer). [Cited 2016 Sep 20], available at http://www.cdc.gov/motorvehiclesafety/teen_drivers/teendrivers_factsheet.html; WISQARS: Leading Causes of Death Reports, 1999-2017, for National, Regional, and States (RESTRICTED), data processed for California, ages 13-19, All-Deaths and Unintentional Injuries, available at <https://webappa.cdc.gov/cgi-bin/broker.exe>, accessed Mar. 6, 2019.

ⁱⁱ Teenagers, Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, available at <https://www.iihs.org/topics/teenagers>.

ⁱⁱⁱ Traffic Safety Facts: 2019 Data, Young Drivers, NHTSA, Jun. 2021, DOT HS 813 130 available at <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813130>.

^{iv} Id.

^v Traffic Safety Facts 2002: Young Drivers, NHTSA, DOT HS 809 619, available at <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/809619>.

^{vi} CPI Inflation Calculator, US Bureau of Labor Statistics, https://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm.

^{vii} Early Estimates of Motor Vehicle Traffic Fatalities and Fatality Rate by Sub-Categories in 2020, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, DOT HS 813 118, June 2021.

^{viii} Transportation Risk Behaviors Among High School Students — Youth Risk Behavior Survey, United States, 2019

^{ix} Timing of Driver's License Acquisition and Reasons for Delay among Young People in the United States, 2012, AAA Foundation for Safety, Jul. 2013, available at <http://newsroom.aaa.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/Teens-Delay-Licensing-FTS-Report.pdf>

^x Mission Not Accomplished: Teen Safe Driving the Next Chapter, GHSA, October 2016, available at https://www.ghsa.org/sites/default/files/2016-12/FINAL_TeenReport16.pdf.

^{xi} Id.

^{xii} Id.

^{xiii} The Economic and Societal Impact of Motor Vehicle Crashes, 2010 (Revised), NHTSA, DOT HS 812 013, May 2015 (revised), available at <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/812013>

^{xiv} 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>

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