



ADVOCATES  
FOR HIGHWAY  
& AUTO SAFETY

March 3, 2023

The Honorable Wm. Weston J. Newton, Chair  
The Honorable Wallace H. Jordan, Jr., First Vice Chair  
The Honorable John Richard C. King, Second Vice Chair  
House Judiciary Committee  
South Carolina Legislature  
1105 Pendleton Street  
Columbia, South Carolina 29201

Dear Chair Newton, Vice Chair Jordan and Vice Chair King:

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 Senate Bill (SB) 36/ House Bill (HB) 3845 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 2020, 315 people were needlessly killed in drunk driving crashes on South Carolina roads according to the most recent data from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA).<sup>i</sup> This is a 14 percent increase in drunk driving fatalities compared to 2019 and accounted for 30 percent of all traffic fatalities that year.<sup>ii</sup> Moreover, traffic fatalities cost the state nearly \$6.3 billion each year.<sup>iii</sup> 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 past 14 years, IIDs have prevented 12,000 attempts to drive drunk in South Carolina, including over 2,000 attempts to drive drunk with in 2020. Expanding the law to include all first time offenders would improve the effectiveness of the IID program and help prevent drunk driving.

A common misconception is that most people who are convicted of their first drunk driving offense are social drinkers who made one mistake. However, studies show that the average first offender will have driven drunk 87 times before getting arrested.<sup>iv</sup> According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), adult drivers admitted they drank too much and got behind the wheel approximately 111 million times in 2014, which equals over 300,000 incidents of drinking and driving each day.<sup>v</sup> However, only 1.1 million, or approximately one percent of that 111 million, were arrested for driving under the influence that year.<sup>vi</sup> Drivers with a BAC of .08 or higher involved in fatal crashes were four times more likely to have a prior conviction for driving while impaired (DWI) than drivers with no alcohol.<sup>vii</sup>

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>viii</sup>

In 2020, an average of one alcohol impaired driving fatality occurred every 45 minutes in the U.S. resulting in a total of 11,654 deaths.<sup>ix</sup> 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 \$69 billion in economic costs (in 2019).<sup>x</sup>

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>xi</sup> Furthermore, 82 percent of offenders themselves believe the IID was effective in preventing them from driving after drinking.<sup>xii</sup>

Unfortunately, after several years of steep traffic fatality increases, early data on the first six months of 2022 finds that alcohol-involved traffic fatalities remain high.<sup>xiii</sup> Advocates urges you to support and advance SB 36/ HB 3845 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> National Center for Statistics and Analysis. (2022, April). Alcohol-impaired driving: 2020 data (Traffic Safety Facts. Report No. DOT HS 813 294). National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

<sup>ii</sup> National Center for Statistics and Analysis. (2022, April). Alcohol-impaired driving: 2020 data (Traffic Safety Facts. Report No. DOT HS 813 294). National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

<sup>iii</sup> Blincoe, L., Miller, T., Wang, J.-S., Swedler, D., Coughlin, T., Lawrence, B., Guo, F., Klauer, S., & Dingus, T. (2022, December). *The economic and societal impact of motor vehicle crashes, 2019* (Report No. DOT HS 813 403). National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

<sup>iv</sup> Drinking and Driving Trips, Stops by the Police, and Arrests: Analyses of the 1995 Survey of Drinking and Driving Attitudes and Behavior, NHTSA, Dec. 2000, DOT HS 809 184, available at [https://rosap.nhtl.bts.gov/view/dot/1779/dot\\_1779\\_DS1.pdf?](https://rosap.nhtl.bts.gov/view/dot/1779/dot_1779_DS1.pdf?)

<sup>v</sup> CDC Impaired Driving: Get the Facts, June 16, 2017, available at <https://tinyurl.com/4etn8xnx>.

<sup>vi</sup> Crime in the United States: Table 29, Estimated Number of Arrests, US 2014, U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, available at <https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2014/crime-in-the-u.s.-2014/tables/table-29>.

<sup>vii</sup> Traffic Safety Facts 2020 Data: Alcohol-Impaired Driving; NHTSA, April 2022, DOT HS 813 294, available at <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813294>.

<sup>viii</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>ix</sup> National Center for Statistics and Analysis. (2022, April). Alcohol-impaired driving: 2020 data (Traffic Safety Facts. Report No. DOT HS 813 294). National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

<sup>x</sup> Blincoe, L., Miller, T., Wang, J.-S., Swedler, D., Coughlin, T., Lawrence, B., Guo, F., Klauer, S., & Dingus, T. (2022, December). *The economic and societal impact of motor vehicle crashes, 2019* (Report No. DOT HS 813 403). National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

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

<sup>xiii</sup> National Center for Statistics and Analysis. (2022, December). *Early estimates of motor vehicle traffic fatalities and fatality rate by sub-categories through June 2022* (Crash•Stats Brief Statistical Summary. Report No. DOT HS 813 405). National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.