



ADVOCATES
FOR HIGHWAY
& AUTO SAFETY

December 12, 2023

The Honorable Craig J. Coughlin, Assembly Speaker
The Honorable Louis D. Greenwald, Majority Leader
New Jersey General Assembly
New Jersey Legislature
State House Annex
Trenton, New Jersey 08625

Dear Speaker Coughlin and Majority Leader Greenwald:

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 enactment of Senate Bill (S.) 2789/ Assembly Bill (A.) 3793. This legislation will improve the current graduated driver licensing (GDL) law for novice drivers by requiring supervised driving hours for novice teen and young adult drivers.

Motor vehicle crashes are a leading cause of death for teens in the United States.ⁱ Per mile driven, 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 drive fast, follow too closely, and underestimate speed and stopping distances. Over the five-year period of 2018 through 2022, there were 313 fatalities in crashes involving drivers under the age of 21 in New Jersey, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA).ⁱⁱⁱ Moreover, compared with other age groups, teens and young adults have lower rates of seat belt use.

New Jersey is one of only three states (AR, MS) without any requirement for novice drivers to complete behind-the-wheel driver training with an adult licensed driver during the examination permit phase. This legislation would close this dangerous safety gap in the GDL law by requiring novice drivers to complete 50 hours of supervised driver training, 10 hours of which must be at night, prior to obtaining a probationary driver license.

Compelling research shows that comprehensive GDL laws, which include a supervised driving requirement, reduce teen crashes and save lives. According to a national study conducted by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (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.^{iv} The IIHS GDL Crash Reduction Calculator estimates that if New Jersey adds a provision for 50 hours of supervised driving to its current GDL law, fatal crashes would be reduced by three percent and collision claims by 13 percent.^v Every life lost has a ripple effect indelibly impacting families, friends and communities.

Graduated driver licensing laws not only save lives by preventing crashes involving young drivers, but they also save states money by reducing crash related costs. The NHTSA estimates the economic costs of crashes totaled \$340 billion in 2019.^{vi} When quality of life valuations is added, the total costs from societal harm rises to nearly \$1.4 trillion.^{vii} In New Jersey, all motor vehicle crashes cost the state more than \$14 billion annually.^{viii}

Furthermore, the American public overwhelmingly supports comprehensive GDL programs. A survey conducted by the IIHS shows that parents favor GDL laws that are as strict as or even stricter than currently

exist in any state.^{ix} Additionally, almost three quarters (74 percent) of teens approve of a comprehensive law that incorporates the key elements of GDL programs, including supervised driving hours, according to a survey by the Allstate Foundation.^x

Unfortunately, 701 people were killed on New Jersey roads in 2022, according to an estimate from NHTSA.^{xi} Improving teen and young adult driver safety will make roads safer for all and is a critical step to reducing the preventable death and injury toll. The State Senate passed this bill in a bipartisan unanimous vote on Monday. We respectfully urge you to bring this important traffic safety legislation to the floor for a vote before the 2022-2023 legislative session concludes. Saving lives is the best holiday gift that you can give your constituents.

Sincerely,



Catherine Chase
President

cc: The Honorable Benjie E. Wimberly, Speaker Pro Tempore
The Honorable Daniel R. Benson
The Honorable Yvonne Lopez

ⁱ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), National Center for Injury Prevention and Control (NCIPC). WISQARS (Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System). U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; July 2020. Available at <https://www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/index.html>. Accessed 1 October 2020.

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

ⁱⁱⁱ NHTSA. State of New Jersey Highway Safety Plan, available at https://www.nhtsa.gov/sites/nhtsa.gov/files/2023-10/NJ_FY24HSP-tag.pdf.

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

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

^{vi} NHTSA. The Economic and Societal Impact of Motor Vehicle Crashes, 2019, DOT HS 813 403, December 2022.

^{vii} *Ibid.*

^{viii} *Ibid.*

^{ix} Williams, A.F; Braitman, K.A.; and McCartt, A.T. 2010. Views of parents of teenagers about licensing policies: a national survey. Arlington, VA: IIHS, available [here](#).

^x Teens Sat “Yes” to Driving Restrictions that Make Roads Safe, Allstate Foundation, Mar. 9, 2011, available at

<https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/teens-say-yes-to-driving-restrictions-that-make-roads-safe-117664988.html>.

xi Early Estimates: 2022 Traffic Crash Deaths, NHTSA, April 2023, DOT 813 HS 428, available at <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813428>.