



ADVOCATES
FOR HIGHWAY
& AUTO SAFETY

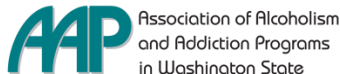


Washington State Commission On
African American Affairs
CAA.A.WA.GOV

Amy J. Freedheim
Chair Felony Traffic Unit
King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office



Washington



Association of Alcoholism
and Addiction Programs
in Washington State



The Honorable Andy Billig
Senate Majority Leader

The Honorable Laurie Jinkins
Speaker of the House

The Honorable Joe Fitzgibbon
House Majority Leader

The Honorable John Braun
Senate Minority Leader

The Honorable Drew Stokesbary
House Minority Leader

Senators Billig and Braun, Speaker Jinkins and Representatives Fitzgibbon and Stokesbary:

Washington roads have become increasingly dangerous for drivers in recent years; 750 traffic fatalities occurred in 2022. This is the highest number of traffic fatalities since 1990. 2023 is on track to be even deadlier, with 417 deaths through the end of July. While there are many factors that play a role in the uptick in traffic fatalities, we also know that more than 50% of the fatal crashes in 2022 involved an impaired driver (Washington Traffic Safety Commission, 2022).

Impaired driving is a serious problem, and Washington leaders need to send a message to the public that impaired driving of any kind is unacceptable. The Washington State Legislature can make an impactful change by adopting Senate Bill 5002 to reduce the statewide blood alcohol concentration (BAC) limit from 0.08 to 0.05. The 0.05 policy is **data-driven**, an international **standard** and **proven effective**. Dozens of laboratory studies show significant impairment at BACs of .05 and above in critical driving tasks. The risk of being in a crash is statistically significant beginning at a .05 BAC.

Adopting the .05% BAC limit will dissuade drinking and driving, and will curb needless highway deaths and injuries, which pose a threat to all of us on Washington Roads. According to a recently released study from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), these trends in traffic deaths are not just limited to Washington State.

Although Utah is currently the only state that has passed and implemented this change, the .05 policy has been proven to be effective around the world:

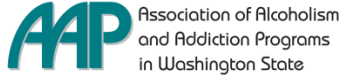
- **The Netherlands** saw a 12% decrease in impaired driving over 10 years after establishing a 0.05 BAC limit (Noordzij, 1994).
- **Austria** saw a 10% decrease in alcohol-related crash injuries in the first year and a 6% decrease after 5 years (Bartl & Esberger, 2000).
- **New South Wales, Australia** experienced an 18% reduction in fatal crashes during the period from 1982 to 1992 after lowering their BAC limit to .05 (Henstridge et al, 1997).
- **Japan** lowered its BAC limit to 0.05 in 1970 and achieved a reduction of traffic deaths of 34% by 1977 and 66% by 1994 (Nagata et al, 2008).



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Over 100 countries have BAC limits of 0.05 or less, including countries with higher per capita alcohol consumption, such as Australia, Austria, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, New Zealand, Portugal, Russian Federation, Spain, and Scotland.

A study done by NHTSA, which evaluated the efficacy of Utah's .05 BAC law, demonstrated a nearly 20% drop in traffic fatalities in 2019. Studies have further shown that when states lowered the limit from 0.10 to 0.08, there were no adverse impacts on the operation of the criminal justice system. Studies evaluating Utah's law confirmed there was not a significant burden on the criminal justice system and no effect on the tourism industry and alcohol sales industry (NHTSA, February 2022). A study reflecting these findings is attached to this letter.

Moreover, there is evidence that lowering the statewide BAC from 0.08 to 0.05 is an effective policy to deter drinking and driving. In a study conducted in 2017, a meta-analysis of qualifying international studies examined the potential effectiveness of this policy. The results demonstrated a 5% decline in nonfatal alcohol-related crashes, a 9.2% decline in fatal alcohol-related crashes from lowering the BAC to .08 and an 11.1% decline in fatal alcohol related crashes from lowering the BAC to 0.05 or lower.

Washington State once again has an opportunity to lead the nation on innovative policy proposals that will save lives. We implore you to pass legislation this session to reduce the statewide BAC from 0.08 to 0.05. Doing so will deter impaired driving behavior and make our roads safer.

Please advance Senate Bill 5002/House Bill 2196 this session.

Sincerely,

The Washington .05 Coalition

cc:

Sen. Manka Dhingra
Sen. Mike Padden
Sen. Marko Lias
Sen. Curtis King
Rep. Roger Goodman
Rep. Gina Mosbrucker
Rep. Jake Fey
Rep. Andrew Barkis
Sen. John Lovick

Rep. Brandy Donaghy
Rep. Tarra Simmons
Rep. Dan Griffey
Rep. Joe Timmons
Rep. Spencer Hutchins
Rep. Sam Low
Sen. Yasmin Trudeau
Rep. Dave Paul



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