



ADVOCATES
FOR HIGHWAY
& AUTO SAFETY



FOUNDATION



Liam'sLife



savir
Society for Advancement of
Violence and Injury Research



March 12, 2024

The Honorable Christine Cohen, Senate Chair
The Honorable Roland Lemar, Co-Chair
The Honorable Rick Lopes, Vice Chair
The Honorable Aimee Berger-Girvalo, Vice Chair
Joint Committee on Transportation
Legislative Office Building, Room 2300
Hartford, Connecticut 06106

Dear Chair Cohen, Co-Chair Lemar, Vice Chair Lopes and Vice Chair Berger-Girvalo:

As representatives of leading public health and safety organizations working to pass roadway and auto safety laws that prevent unnecessary deaths and injuries and contain crash costs, we urge you to support Senate Bill (SB) 424. This bill would lower the legal limit of alcohol-impaired driving to .05 percent blood alcohol concentration (BAC), deter drunk driving and save lives.

Drunk driving is a deadly and costly threat to Connecticut families. In 2021, there were 298 fatalities on state roads, and 38 percent of those (112) involved drunk driving.ⁱ In addition, Connecticut incurred \$6.1 billion in economic harm, which is equivalent to \$1,712 per resident each year, due to motor vehicle crashes according to a 2019 analysis.ⁱⁱ This is the third highest cost per capita of any state.ⁱⁱⁱ Drunk driving is a serious problem that requires urgent action. Advancing .05 percent BAC legislation will reduce dangerous drinking and driving across all levels of impairment, including high BAC, to prevent deaths and injuries.

Nationwide about 30 percent of traffic fatalities involve a drunk driver. In addition to the physical and emotional impact, these crashes impose a financial burden including on businesses. Drunk driving crashes cost employers \$8 billion each year with 81 percent of those costs coming in crashes while off the job.^{iv} We must implement solutions that are strongly supported by research and the public health and safety community.^v If all states adopted a .05 percent BAC or lower law, fatal alcohol crashes would decline 11 percent and 1,790 lives would be saved each year.^{vi}

Research shows significant impairment at .05 percent BAC.^{vii} Drivers have reduced coordination, decreased ability to track moving objects, difficulty steering and diminished response to emergency situations.^{viii} The risk of being killed in a single-vehicle crash with BACs of .05 to .079 percent is up to 21 times higher than for drivers without measurable alcohol.^{ix}

Opponents may claim that lowering the BAC will decrease alcohol sales. Reducing BAC limits does not discourage alcohol consumption.^x It does deter driving after drinking. Further, studies show that when states lowered their BAC limits from .10 to .08 percent, there were no adverse impacts on the criminal justice system or increase in arrests. Similarly, when Utah reduced its BAC limit from .08 to .05 percent, alcohol sales and tourism went up while DUI arrests went down.^{xi} Per capita DUI arrests declined seven percent since the last full fiscal year before the .05 percent BAC limit went into effect.^{xii}

Lowering the limit of BAC is a research-driven countermeasure successfully employed around the world but underused in the United States. More than 100 countries have .05 percent BAC or lower limits. In these countries

average alcohol consumption is equal or higher to that in the United States, but they have less deaths caused by drunk driving.^{xiii}

The data are clear, the lifesaving benefits are certain, and the justifications for action are compelling. We urge you to seriously address and prevent drunk driving by enacting SB 424. Every death caused by an alcohol-related crash on Connecticut roads forever changes the lives of families and communities. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Catherine Chase, President
Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety

Natalie A. Draisin, Director, North American Office
& United Nations Representative
FIA Foundation

Janette Fennell, Founder and President
Kids and Car Safety

Marcus Kowal and Mishel Eder, Co-founders
Liam's Life Foundation
Parents of Liam Mikael Kowal

Bob Garguilo, Executive Director, New England
Region
Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD)

Lorraine Martin, President and CEO
National Safety Council

David A. Sleet, Ph.D., Professor Emeritus
College of Health San Diego State University

Honorable T. Bella Dinh-Zarr, Former Vice Chair
National Transportation Safety Board
Co-founder, .05 Saves Lives Coalition

Thomas M. Louizou, Former Regional Administrator
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
Co-founder, .05 Saves Lives Coalition

Andrew McGuire, Executive Director
Trauma Foundation

Stephen Hargarten, MD, MPH, Founding President
Society for the Advancement of Violence and Injury
Research (SAVIR)

Brandy Nannini, Chief Government Affairs Officer
SAFE

Marilena Amoni, Former Associate Administrator
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
Co-founder, .05 Saves Lives Coalition

Additional organizations that are not signers but recommend or support .05 percent BAC policy:

American Medical Association (AMA)
American Public Health Association (APHA)
Association for the Advancement of Automotive
Medicine (AAAM)
Governors Highway Safety Association (GHSA)
National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and
Medicine (NASEM)
National Road Safety Foundation

National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB)
Remove Intoxicated Drivers (RID)
Safe States Alliance
Society for Public Health Education
Transportation Alternatives
Vision Zero Network
World Health Organization (WHO)

ⁱ State Traffic Safety Information for Connecticut (2021), NHSTA, available at <https://cdan.dot.gov/stsi.htm>.

ⁱⁱ The Economic and Societal Impact of Motor Vehicle Crashes, 2019, NHTSA, Feb. 2023, DOT HS 813 403, available at <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813403>.

ⁱⁱⁱ *Ibid.*

^{iv} Cost of Motor Vehicle Crashes to Employers 2019; Network of Employers for Traffic Safety,

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- v available at <https://trafficsafety.org/road-safety-resources/public-resources/cost-of-motor-vehicle-crashes-to-employers-2019/>.
Fell, Jim C., Voas, Robert B, *The effectiveness of a 0.05 blood alcohol concentration (BAC) limit for driving in the United States*, PIRE. June 2014. NTSB Safety Compass, *Drink or Drive Pick One*: <https://safetycompass.wordpress.com/2019/04/29/drink-or-drive-pick-one/>.
NORC: Fell JC & Scherer M, Estimation of the Potential Effectiveness of Lowering the Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC) Limit for Driving From 0.08 to 0.05 Grams per Deciliter in the United States, 2017. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2E5pliq>.
- vii NTSB, .05 BAC Safety Briefing Facts, February 2017, available at <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DOT/documents/dvisionzero/NTSB-05-SafetyBriefingMarch2019.pdf>.
- viii MADD, What is .08? Available at: <http://www.madd.org/drunken-driving/about/understanding-08.html>.
- ix Fell, Jim C., Voas, Robert B, *The effectiveness of a 0.05 blood alcohol concentration (BAC) limit for driving in the United States*, PIRE. June 2014.
- x NTSB, .05 BAC Safety Briefing Facts, February 2017.
- xi Leaver, Jennifer, *The State of Utah's Travel and Tourism Industry 2019*, Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute University of Utah, September 2020.
Utah Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control, Annual Reports 2018, 2019 and 2020, available [here](#). 17th Annual DUI Report to the Utah Legislature, Utah Commission on Criminal and Juvenile Justice, 2019. Available at: <https://le.utah.gov/interim/2019/pdf/00004834.pdf>.
- xii 20th annual DUI Report to the Utah Legislature, Utah Commission on Criminal and Juvenile Justice, 2022. Available at: <https://justice.utah.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022-DUI-Annual-Report-Final.pdf>.
- xiii NTSB, .05 BAC Safety Briefing Facts, February 2017.