



March 8, 2024

The Honorable Jaime M. Andrade, Jr., Chairperson
The Honorable Dave Vella, Vice-Chairperson
Committee on Transportation: Vehicles & Safety
Illinois House of Representatives
State Capitol, 401 S. Spring Street
Springfield, Illinois 62706

Dear Chairperson Andrade and Vice Chairperson Vella:

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 House Bill (HB) 5620, which would require all motorcycle operators and passengers to utilize the lifesaving protection of helmets.

Motorcycles are the most hazardous form of motor vehicle transportation, and fatalities are rising. In 2021, 5,932 motorcyclists were killed in the U.S., the most on record.ⁱ Estimates for 2022 indicate a five percent increase.ⁱⁱ Motorcycle riders are nearly 28 times more likely to die in a crash than people in passenger vehicles.ⁱⁱⁱ In 2021, 174 motorcyclists lost their lives in Illinois and 62 percent (108) were not wearing a helmet.^{iv} Illinois motorcyclist fatalities have increased 18 percent since 2012.^v

In addition to the physical and emotional burden, traffic crashes exact a financial toll. In 2019, the estimated cost of traffic crashes in Illinois was \$14 billion, effectively imposing a \$1,103 “crash tax” on each resident.^{vi} Annually, U.S. motorcycle crashes cause nearly \$17 billion in economic impacts and \$107 billion in societal harm as measured by comprehensive costs based on 2019 data.^{vii} Serious injuries and fatalities accounted for 83 percent of total comprehensive costs of motorcycle crashes, compared to 60 percent for all motor vehicle crashes.^{viii}

Conversely, in 2019, motorcycle helmets prevented \$21.2 billion in societal harm costs, but another \$9.4 billion could have been saved if all riders had worn helmets.^{ix} Helmets reduce the cost of medical treatment, length of hospital stay and probability of long-term disability for motorcyclists injured in a crash.^x In states with an all-rider helmet law, use of a helmet resulted in economic costs saved to society of \$725 per registered motorcycle, compared with \$198 per registered motorcycle in states without such a law.^{xi}

We recommend that every state have an all-rider motorcycle helmet law because this is a verified lifesaver. According to a report by the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO), laws requiring all motorcyclists to wear helmets are the only strategy proven to be effective in reducing motorcyclist fatalities.^{xii} Helmets are vital as they reduce the risk of head injury by 69 percent and risk of death by 42 percent.^{xiii} Data from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) show that in states with all-rider helmet laws, use of helmets compliant with federal standards is 86 percent, compared to just 53 percent in states without such a law.^{xiv} In 2021, there were 9.6 times as many unhelmeted fatalities (2,038 fatalities) in states without a universal helmet law compared to states with a universal helmet law (213 fatalities).^{xv} These states were similar in total populations.^{xvi}

With motorcyclist fatalities at record levels we urge you to advance HB 5620. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Peter Kurdock, General Counsel

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- i Traffic Safety Facts: 2021 Data, Motorcycles, NHTSA, Jun. 2023 (Revised), DOT HS 813 466, available at <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813466>.
- ii 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.
- iii Traffic Safety Facts. 2020 Data: Motorcycles, NHTSA, May 2022, DOT HS 813 306.
- iv NHSTA State Traffic Safety Information for Illinois, accessible at <https://cdan.dot.gov/stsi.htm>.
- v *Ibid.*
- vi The Economic and Societal Impact of Motor Vehicle Crashes, 2019 (Revised), National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), February 2023, DOT HS 813 403, available at: <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813403>.
- vii *Ibid.*
- viii *Ibid.*
- ix *Ibid.*
- x Costs of Injuries Resulting from Motorcycle Crashes: A Literature Review, NHTSA, November 2002, DOT HS 809 242.
- xi Helmet use Among Motorcyclists Who Died in Crashes and Economic Cost Savings Associated with State Motorcycle Helmet Laws – United States, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2012.
- xii Motorcycle Safety: Increasing Federal Funding Flexibility and Identifying Research Priorities Would Help Support States’ Safety Efforts, U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO), November 2012, available at: <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-13-42>.
- xiii Liu BC, Ivers R, Norton R, Boufous S, Blows S, and Lo SK, “Helmets for Preventing Injury in Motorcycle Riders (Review),” The Cochrane Library, 2009.
- xiv Traffic Safety Facts Research Note, Motorcycle Helmet Use in 2021 – Overall Results, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), March 2022, DOT HS 813 270, available at: <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/Publication/813270>.
- xv Traffic Safety Facts 2021 Data: Motorcycles, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration NHTSA, June 2023, DOT HS 813 466, available at: <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813466>; 2020 Population and Housing State Data, US Census Bureau, August 2021, available at <https://www.census.gov/library/visualizations/interactive/2020-population-and-housing-state-data.html>.
- xvi 2020 Population and Housing State Data, US Census Bureau, available at <https://www.census.gov/library/visualizations/interactive/2020-population-and-housing-state-data.html>.