



ADVOCATES
FOR HIGHWAY
& AUTO SAFETY

April 29, 2024

The Honorable Kim Reynolds
Governor of Iowa
Office of the Governor
Iowa State Capitol
1007 East Grand Avenue
Des Moines, Iowa 50319

Dear Governor Reynolds:

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, urges you to veto Senate File (SF) 2109. This measure expands an exemption to the graduated driver licensing (GDL) law for a special minors' restricted license and will increase the number of inexperienced and unsupervised drivers on state roads. It weakens the current GDL law and threatens the safety of novice teen drivers and all who share the roads with them.

In the U.S., teenagers drive less than all but the oldest drivers, yet their number of crashes and crash deaths are disproportionately high.ⁱ Per mile driven, teen drivers have crash rates nearly four times higher than drivers aged 20 and older.ⁱⁱ

In addition to preventing fatalities and injuries, GDL laws save states money. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) estimates the economic cost of police-reported crashes involving drivers between 15 and 20 years old in the U.S. is \$40.8 billion according to a 2002 analysis.ⁱⁱⁱ When adjusted for inflation only, these costs amount to \$71.1 billion in 2024 dollars.^{iv} In Iowa, all motor vehicle crashes cost the state nearly \$2.8 billion - essentially resulting in a "crash tax" of \$885 on each Iowa resident.^v

This legislation would permit drivers as young as 14 years old to drive to work. SF 2109 also would allow driving an hour before and after permitted activities instead of retaining the prohibition on drivers operating under a special minors' restricted license that limits driving to between 5 am and 10 pm. Nighttime driving is particularly dangerous for novice drivers, with 19 percent of fatalities involving teen drivers occurring between 9 pm and midnight.^{vi} Lastly, the bill would allow the special license holder to identify three residences and drive within 25-miles of each one. These changes will make enforcement of the nighttime driving restriction and mileage restrictions exceedingly challenging, if not impossible.

Over the ten-year period of 2013 to 2022, 3,383 people died on Iowa's roads.^{vii viii} Exemptions to permit students to drive to school, extracurricular activities, and farm work already exist in Iowa's GDL law. The law should not be weakened by adding more exemptions and complicating enforcement efforts. We urge you to veto SF 2109 to keep Iowans safe.

Sincerely,

Catherine Chase
President

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- i Insurance Institute for Highway Safety. 2013. [Unpublished analysis of 2008 data from the U.S. Department of Transportation's National Household Travel Survey, General Estimates System, and Fatality Analysis Reporting System].
- ii Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS), Teenagers, available at <https://www.iihs.org/topics/teenagers#by-the-numbers>.
- iii Traffic Safety Facts 2002: Young Drivers, NHTSA, DOT HS 809 619, available at <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/809619>.
- iv CPI Inflation Calculator, US Bureau of Labor Statistics, <https://data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/cpicalc.pl>; Based on Jan. 2002 to Jan. 2024 value.
- v 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>.
- vi Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, Fatality Facts 2021: Teenagers website, available at [https://www.iihs.org/topics/fatality- statistics/detail/teenagers](https://www.iihs.org/topics/fatality-statistics/detail/teenagers).
- vii State Traffic Safety Information for Iowa (2021), NHTSA, available at <https://cdan.dot.gov/stsi.htm>.
- viii NHTSA. (2024). Overview of Motor Vehicle Crashes in 2022. U.S. Department of Transportation, available [here](#).