



ADVOCATES
FOR HIGHWAY
& AUTO SAFETY

May 30, 2024

The Honorable Sarah Stevens, Chair
The Honorable Charles W. Miller, Vice Chair
House Committee on Judiciary 2
North Carolina General Assembly
16 West Jones Street Raleigh, North Carolina 27601

Dear Chair Stevens and Vice Chair Miller:

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) 1043 to improve the ignition interlock device (IID) law by requiring Driving While Impaired (DWI) offenders to engage in a compliance based removal in order to complete the IID term. We urge you to also expand the current IID mandate to all first-time offenders to increase the benefits of this proven technology and prevent drunk driving.

HB 1043 will compel an offender required to use an IID to not have any attempts to start the vehicle after consuming alcohol in the 90-day period prior to the conclusion of the IID term. If a violation occurs during this period, the IID will remain another 90 days until a person demonstrates compliance. This practice helps to ensure that the behavioral change necessary to earn the right to drive without an IID has occurred.

However, the improvement is limited to current law which mandates IID use for DWI offenders whose blood alcohol concentration (BAC) level was 0.15 percent or higher and for repeat offenders. Given the seriousness of drunk driving and the effectiveness of IIDs in preventing drunk driving -- while still allowing an offender to drive when not impaired -- adding all first-time offenders is a sensible action to save lives.

Drunk driving is a deadly, costly, and growing threat to North Carolina families. Drunk driving deaths in the state have increased 25 percent over the ten-year period, 2013-2022. In 2022, 460 people were needlessly killed in drunk driving crashes on North Carolina roads according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA).ⁱ This accounted for 28 percent of all North Carolina traffic fatalities that year.ⁱⁱ In addition, the Tar Heel State incurred \$12 billion in economic harm, which is equivalent to a "crash tax" of \$1,148 per resident each year due to motor vehicle crashes according to a 2019 analysis.ⁱⁱⁱ Clearly, this is a serious issue which requires urgent attention and the effective solution of an all offender IID law backed by compliance based removal.

A common misconception is that most people who are convicted of their first drunk driving offense are social drinkers who made one mistake. However, studies show that the average first offender will have driven drunk 87 times before getting arrested.^{iv} There is overwhelming support, as high as 88 percent in polling, in the United States for requiring ignition interlocks for all convicted DUI offenders, even if it is their first conviction.^v Eighty-two (82) percent of offenders themselves believe the IID was effective in preventing them from driving after drinking.^{vi}

In 2022, on average an alcohol impaired driving fatality occurred every 39 minutes in the U.S. resulting in 13,524 deaths.^{vii} Action must be taken against the scourge of drunk driving. Advocates urges you to upgrade and advance HB 1043 to ensure all DWI offenders use an IID subject to a compliance based removal. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Catherine Chase, President

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- i State Traffic Safety Information for North Carolina (2022), NHTSA, available at <https://cdan.dot.gov/stsi.htm#>.
- ii *Ibid.*
- iii 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>.
- iv Drinking and Driving Trips, Stops by the Police, and Arrests: Analyses of the 1995 Survey of Drinking and Driving Attitudes and Behavior, NHTSA, Dec. 2000, DOT HS 809 184, available at https://rosap.nhtl.bts.gov/view/dot/1779/dot_1779_DS1.pdf.
- v MADD, How Technology Has Stopped 1.77 Million Drunk Drivers: A State by State Guide to Creating a Future of No More Victims, February 10, 2016; available at <https://online.flippingbook.com/view/57396/4/>.
- vi Morse, BJ and DS Elliott. Hamilton County Drinking and Driving Study: 30 Month Report. Boulder, Colorado: University of Colorado, 1990, available at <https://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/hamilton-county-drinking-and-driving-study-30-month-report>.
- vii Overview of Motor Vehicle Crashes, 2022, NHTSA DOT HS 813 560, April 2024, available at: <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813560>.