



December 13, 2024

Mr. Kyle Wagonseller
House Transportation Committee, Executive Director
Pennsylvania General Assembly
127 Irvis Office Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Mr. Wagonseller:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input for the 2025-2026 legislative session. A good starting point to target proven measures to upgrade safety on Pennsylvania roads is Advocates' recently released annual 2025 [Roadmap to Safety](#) report. This comprehensive tool provides a guide for policymakers to address the tragic yet preventable number of deaths and injuries on U.S. roadways. The report rates each state based on 18 optimal traffic safety laws and provisions that we recommend all states adopt. This year, Pennsylvania received a "yellow" rating as the state has implemented only eight of the 18 measures (See page 58 of the *Roadmap*). Information about the ten missing laws, automated enforcement and the benefits of these measures follows.

Adult Occupant Protection

The Keystone State requires seat belts for adults in front seats and enforces the seat belt law as a secondary offense. For motorcycle riders, helmets are required only for those under the age of 21 or in their first two years of riding who have not taken a safety course.

To enhance safety, seat belt use should be required in all seats and be subject to primary enforcement to maximize compliance. Additionally, an all-rider motorcycle helmet law should be enacted to increase helmet utilization. Please see additional facts and information in our [seat belt](#) and [motorcycle safety](#) fact sheets.

Distracted Driving

Pennsylvania's distracted driving law bans holding an interactive mobile device (device) while driving but allows hands free use. The law does not prohibit novice teen and young adult drivers from using devices while driving. Distracted driving is dangerous for all but especially for the least experienced drivers. We recommend adding a comprehensive ban on device use for these drivers, including hands free use, except in an emergency. Please see additional facts and information in our [distracted driving](#) fact sheet.

Graduated Driver Licensing

Pennsylvania can improve its graduated driver licensing (GDL) law which enables novice young drivers to learn to drive under safer conditions by reducing risky driving situations by enacting the following: a 70 hours of supervised driving requirement, a nighttime driving restriction and a passenger restriction, as defined by the Roadmap to Safety report on page 8.

The current law requires 65 hours of supervised driving, allows GDL drivers to drive as late as 11:00 pm and allows one non-familial teen passenger during the first six months of driving with an intermediate license and as many as three such passengers after six months. Improvements are needed in these areas. See additional facts and information in our [GDL](#) fact sheet.

Child Passenger Safety

Children are required to be in a rear facing safety seat through age two and in a booster seat from age four until age eight. State law is silent on a rear seat preference.

Children who are under 8 years of age and less than 57 inches in height should be in a booster seat. This recommendation is supported by growth charts from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for the average development of children, which find that more than 95 percent of boys and girls are less than 4 feet 9 inches in height at age nine.ⁱ

Therefore, in the vast majority of cases, the transition from a booster seat to seat belts should occur beyond age eight.

Additionally, child passengers should be required to ride in rear seats until age 13. Front seats can be dangerous for children under 13 because air bags and seatbelts are designed for adults (in size and weight). These recommendations are identified as best practice by the American Association of Pediatrics (AAP). See additional facts and information in our [child passenger safety](#) fact sheet.

Drunk Driving

State law requires people who are repeat offenders or are first time offenders with a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) level of 0.10 percent or higher to use ignition interlock devices (IID). The IID law can be improved by requiring all offenders to use an IID and closing the gap for first-time drunk drivers with a BAC between .08-.099. See additional facts and information in our [alcohol impaired driving](#) safety fact sheet

Automated Enforcement

Pennsylvania allows speed safety cameras (SSC) and red light safety cameras (RLC) in areas specified by state law. Lawmakers should increase where SSC can be utilized and renew, and expand, enabling legislation for localities to use RLC that is scheduled to expire in 2027. See additional facts and information in our [automated enforcement](#) safety fact sheet.

Conclusion

In 2023, 1,229 people were killed on Pennsylvania's roads according to an estimate from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA).ⁱⁱ In the same year an additional 66,546 people were injured in crashes according to the state Department of Transportation.ⁱⁱⁱ The Keystone State incurs more than \$6.6 billion in economic harm annually due to motor vehicle crashes, which is equivalent to \$520 per resident each year.^{iv} Traffic safety is a serious and costly issue in urgent need of verified solutions.

These research-backed solutions will make Pennsylvanians safer. By enacting these upgrades Pennsylvania can become the national leader in traffic safety. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Catherine Chase, President

ⁱ Clinical Growth Charts, National Center for Health Statistics, Centers for Disease Control, available at https://www.cdc.gov/growthcharts/clinical_charts.htm.

ⁱⁱ Early Estimate of Motor Vehicle Traffic Fatalities in 2023, NHTSA, April 2024, DOT HS 813 561, available at <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813561>.

ⁱⁱⁱ 2023 Pennsylvania Crash Facts & Statistics, Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, available at https://www.pa.gov/content/dam/copapwp-pagov/en/pennidot/documents/travelinpa/safety/documents/2023_cfb_linked.pdf.

^{iv} 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>.