



ADVOCATES
FOR HIGHWAY
& AUTO SAFETY

February 10, 2024

The Honorable Darius K. Kila, Chair
The Honorable Tina Nakada Grandinetti, Vice Chair
House Committee on Transportation
Hawaii State Legislature
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Chair Kila and Vice Chair Grandinetti:

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) 537, which would require all operators and passengers of two-wheeled motorized vehicles to utilize the lifesaving protection of helmets.

Motorcycles are the most hazardous form of motor vehicle transportation, and fatalities are rising. In 2022, 6,218 motorcyclists were killed in the U.S., the highest number of fatalities on record.ⁱ An additional 82,687 motorcyclists were injured in the same year.ⁱⁱ Motorcycle riders are nearly 28 times more likely to die in a crash than passenger vehicle occupants.ⁱⁱⁱ In 2022, 33 motorcyclists lost their lives in Hawaii, and 68 percent were not wearing a helmet when helmet use was known.^{iv} Hawaii motorcyclist fatalities have increased 65 percent since the pre-pandemic 2019 level.^v

In addition to the physical and emotional burden, traffic crashes exact a financial toll. In addition, Hawaii incurred \$580 million in economic harm due to motor vehicle crashes according to a 2019 analysis.^{vi} Updating for inflation only this cost would be \$711 million in 2024 dollars.^{vii} Annually, motorcycle rider crashes cost nearly \$17 billion in economic impacts and \$107 billion in societal harm as measured by comprehensive costs based on 2019 data.^{viii} Accounting for inflation alone, in 2024, this would equate to over \$21 billion in economic impacts, and over \$131 billion in societal harm.^{ix} Serious injuries and fatalities accounted for 83 percent of total comprehensive costs of motorcyclist crashes, compared to 60 percent of the total comprehensive costs of all motor vehicle crashes.^x

Conversely, in 2019, motorcycle helmet use prevented \$21.2 billion in societal harm costs, but another \$9.4 billion could have been prevented if all motorcycle riders had worn helmets.^{xi} Updating for inflation only, in 2024 this would equate to \$26 billion in societal harm prevented and over \$11.5 billion if all riders had worn helmets.^{xii} Helmets reduce the cost of medical treatment, length of hospital stay and probability of long-term disability for motorcyclists injured in a crash.^{xiii} 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.^{xiv}

We recommend that every state has 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.^{xv} Helmets are vital as they reduce the risk of head injury by 69 percent and risk of death by 42 percent.^{xvi} Federal data show that in states with all-rider helmet use laws, use of helmets compliant with federal standards is 83 percent, compared to just 66 percent in states without such a law.^{xvii} In 2022, there were 7.7 times as many unhelmeted fatalities (1,986 fatalities) in states without a universal helmet use law compared to states with a universal helmet law (258 fatalities).^{xviii} These states were similar in total populations.^{xix} A recent analysis from the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) calculated that between 1976 and 2022, over 22,000 additional lives could have been saved if all states had enacted all-rider motorcycle helmet laws.^{xx}

With motorcyclist fatalities at record levels, we urge you to advance HB 537. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Catherine Chase, President

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- i Traffic Safety Facts: 2022 Data, Motorcycles, National Highway and Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), July 2024 (Revised), DOT HS 813 589, available at <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813589>.
- ii Ibid.
- iii Traffic Safety Facts. 2020 Data: Motorcycles, NHTSA, May 2022, DOT HS 813 306.
- iv State Traffic Safety Information for Hawaii (2022), NHTSA, available at <https://cdan.dot.gov/stsi.htm>.
- v Ibid.
- vi 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>.
- vii CPI Inflation Calculator, BLS, January 2019 to January 2024 dollars, available [here](#).
- viii 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>.
- ix CPI Inflation Calculator, BLS, January 2019 to January 2024 dollars, available at <https://data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/cpicalc.pl>.
- x 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>.
- xi Ibid.
- xii CPI Inflation Calculator, BLS, January 2019 to January 2024 dollars, available at <https://data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/cpicalc.pl>.
- xiii Costs of Injuries Resulting from Motorcycle Crashes: A Literature Review, NHTSA, November 2002, DOT HS 809 242.
- xiv 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.
- xv 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>.
- xvi 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.
- xvii Traffic Safety Facts, Research Note: Motorcycle Helmet Use in 2023 – Overall Results, NHTSA, Sept. 2024, DOT HS 813 634, available at <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813634>.
- xviii 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>.
- xix 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>.
- xx The human cost of allowing unhelmeted motorcycling in the United States, Oct. 2024, IIHS, available at: <https://www.iihs.org/topics/bibliography/ref/2317>.