



February 26, 2025

Chair Schroer, Vice Chair Gregory, and members of the Senate Committee on the Judiciary and Civil and Criminal Jurisprudence:

On behalf of our organizations, we urge your support and swift passage of Senate Bill 353 and House Bill 273 to require drunk drivers who enter into a diversion program agreement to utilize an ignition interlock device. Diversion programs are an alternative sentencing option used in many court systems that allows a defendant charged with certain crimes to avoid a criminal conviction. Often used for people facing first-time arrests or non-violent misdemeanor offenses, these programs require a combination of education, counseling, monitoring, and accountability. Interlock usage in these programs will help rehabilitate drunk drivers and keep them off the roads during their recovery.

Ignition interlocks are **already** mandatory for repeat DUI offenders, and first offenders seeking to drive during the 90-day administrative license suspension following a DUI. This legislation, which passed through the House last session, will close a loophole in Missouri’s traffic safety laws. Currently, drunk drivers who enter into diversion agreements are not required to use ignition interlock devices, allowing them to avoid an important accountability measure.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, the issue of drunk driving in Missouri is worsening. In 2022, 290 people were killed in drunk driving crashes in Missouri, a 23% increase from pre-pandemic numbers from 2019. Missouri’s Ignition Interlock Program **prevented 11,497 attempts** to start or operate a vehicle where the driver’s blood alcohol concentration was above the legal limit in 2023 alone, and over 160,000 attempts since 2006. Nationally, ignition interlocks have stopped over 38 million total attempts to drive drunk over the last 17 years. Ignition interlocks are a cost-effective and proven solution that reduces drunk driving recidivism and helps keep our nation’s roads safe.

- [Studies](#) show that ignition interlocks reduce recidivism—[by up to 70%](#)— among first-time, repeat and high-risk offenders while they are installed.
- An Insurance Institute for Highway Safety [study](#) concluded “laws mandating alcohol ignition interlocks...are an effective impaired driving countermeasure that reduces the number of impaired drivers in fatal crashes.”
- A [study](#) from the University of Pennsylvania showed that ignition interlocks reduced instances of alcohol involved fatal crashes, and stated that ignition interlocks “are a lifesaving technology that merit wider use.”

Ignition interlocks are an effective and valuable tool to provide accountability for program participants, while incentivizing behavior change. Ignition interlocks allow offenders in diversion agreements to participate fully in their daily lives, support their families, and participate in their communities while ensuring sober driving. We strongly urge you to pass this bill for safer roads and to save lives.

Sincerely,

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