ADVOCATES
FOR HIGHWAY
& AUTO SAFETY

March 27, 2025

The Honorable Carolyn Bosn, Chairperson
The Honorable Wendy DeBoer, Vice Chairperson
Judiciary Committee
Nebraska Legislature
Post Office Box 94604
Lincoln, Nebraska 68509

Dear Chair Bosn and Vice Chair DeBoer:

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 enactment of Legislative Bill (LB) 600 and LB 616. LB 600 includes provisions to allow for use of automated enforcement (AE) in active highway work zones and school zones and to authorize variable speed limit (VSL) programs on highways. LB 616 would allow localities to utilize AE for red light running violations. We urge you to permit use of these technologies to improve safety by advancing LB 600 and LB 616.

Two hundred twenty-seven (227) people were killed on Nebraska roads in 2023. It also was the highest number of speed-related fatal crashes recorded in a decade.[i] People in work zones are especially vulnerable to the dangers on the roads. On average, eight people died in work zone crashes each year from 2010-2020 in the state.[ii] In addition to the tragic loss of lives, Nebraska incurred over $1.7 billion in economic harm, which is equivalent to $892 per resident each year, due to motor vehicle crashes according to a 2019 analysis.[iii] When updated for inflation alone, in 2025, costs would equate to $2.2 billion and $1,131 respectively.[iv] Traffic safety is a serious and costly issue in urgent need of proven solutions.

Speed safety cameras are proven to deter speeding and its impact and are recommended for state and local adoption by the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), among others.[v] A study by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) found that speed safety cameras alone resulted in a 19 percent reduction in the likelihood that a crash caused a fatal or incapacitating injury.[vi] Similarly, the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) found that AE reduces fatalities and injuries by 20-37 percent and is particularly effective in school and work zones.[vii]

Another effective speed-related countermeasure is VSL programs to ensure the speed of traffic is appropriate for roadway conditions. Research found that VSLs can reduce crashes on freeways up to 34 percent for total crashes, 65 percent for rear-end crashes and 51 percent for fatal and injury crashes.[viii] According to the FHWA, VSLs are a proven countermeasure and important to the Safe System Approach of which safe speeds are a key element.[ix]

These programs help to reduce congestion and mitigate congestion-related safety issues including stop and start traffic, hard braking and aggressive driving resulting in collisions. They also can decrease speeds in response to changes in traffic volume, roadway surface conditions, roadway repair and construction, and weather, among other factors and work to maintain a safe and efficient roadway. LB 600 will allow the state Department of Transportation to use VSL programs in response to weather or environmental conditions that limit visibility, any condition that could reduce traction, an emergency, traffic congestion or reduced traffic flow or mobility.

Red light running can be deadly and damaging and requires the implementation of verified solutions. Americans are more likely to be injured in a red light running-related event than any other crash.[x] In 2022, 1,149 people were killed and an estimated 107,000 were injured in red light running crashes in the U.S.[xi] In fact, 25 percent of drivers admit to running a red light in the past 30 days[xii] even though 83 percent believe that doing so is “very” or “extremely” dangerous.[xiii] Red light cameras are a proven tool to deter this behavior. The Journal of Safety Research found that rates of fatal red light running crashes were 21 percent lower and all fatal crashes were 14 percent lower at signalized intersections in cities with camera programs.[xiv] Conversely, cities that took down their red light safety cameras experienced a 30 percent increase in deadly red light running crashes and a 16 percent increase in fatal crashes at signalized intersections overall.[xv] This “spillover” effect, wherein people modify their driving habits to avoid running red lights at intersections with and without safety cameras, amplifies the benefits of such programs overall.

Law enforcement officers risk their lives when performing their duties on the roadways every day, and it is implausible for them to be everywhere and catch every violation. AE augments traditional enforcement without requiring a traffic stop. VSL helps to control the flow of traffic to prevent scenarios in which law enforcement interaction is necessary.

Advocates urges you to advance LB 600 and LB 616 to save lives and keep Nebraska families whole and visitors safe. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Catherine Chase, President

cc: Judiciary Committee members

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[i] Nebraska Department of Transportation. Motor Vehicle Fatalities - 2014-2023, available at: https://dot.nebraska.gov/media/zclppnrl/tr2fatals.pdf; Nebraska Department of Transportation. Fatal / Injury Speed-Related Crashes - 2014-2023 available at https://dot.nebraska.gov/media/zmvhghdr/sp2crashes.pdf.

[ii] Nebraska Department of Transportation. Motor Vehicle Fatal Traffic Crashes in Work Zones - 2010-2020, available at https://dot.nebraska.gov/media/34ocuvfh/workzone.pdf.

[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] CPI Inflation Calculator, BLS, Jan. 2019 to Jan. 2025, available at https://data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/cpicalc.pl.

[v] Reducing Speeding-Related Crashes Involving Passenger Vehicles, NTSB, July 2017, SS-17-01, available at https://www.ntsb.gov/safety/safety-studies/Documents/SS1701.pdf.

[vi] Effects of Automated Speed Enforcement in Montgomery County Maryland on Vehicle Speeds, Public Opinion and Crashes, IIHS, August; available at https://www.iihs.org/topics/bibliography/ref/2097.

[vii] Speed Safety Camera Program Planning and Operations Guide, Federal Highway Administration, January 2023, available at Speed Safety Camera Program Planning and Operations Guide.

[viii] Avelar et al. Developing Crash Modification Factors for Variable Speed Limit, FHWA (2020), available at https://highways.dot.gov/safety/proven-safety-countermeasures/variable-speed-limits#psc-footnote.

[ix] Proven Safety Countermeasures, FHWA, available at https://highways.dot.gov/safety/proven-safety-countermeasures.

[x] "If You Run a Red Light You are Betting More than You Can Lose," Federal Highway Administration, available at https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/intersection/signal/fhwasa11016.pdf.

[xi] Red Light Running, IIHS, available at https://www.iihs.org/topics/red-light-running#overview.

[xii] 2022 Traffic Safety Culture Index, AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, November 2023, available at https://newsroom.aaa.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/AAAFTS-TSCI-Technical-Report.pdf.

[xiii] Ibid.

[xiv] Effects of turning on and off red light cameras on fatal crashes in large U.S. cities, Journal of Safety Research, June 2017, available at https://www.iihs.org/topics/bibliography/ref/2121.

[xv] Ibid.