



ADVOCATES
FOR HIGHWAY
& AUTO SAFETY



SAFE
K:IDS
WORLDWIDE®

May 9, 2025

The Honorable Ted Davis, Jr., Chair
The Honorable Hugh Blackwell, Vice Chair
House Committee on Judiciary 1
North Carolina General Assembly
16 West Jones Street
Raleigh, North Carolina 27601

Dear Chair Davis and Vice Chair Blackwell:

As representatives of leading safety organizations working to advance roadway and auto safety laws that prevent deaths and injuries and contain crash costs, we urge you to oppose House Bill (HB) 584. This measure will eliminate supervised driving requirements for limited learner's permits and limited provisional license holders. It also will reduce the holding period for a limited learner's permit to six months until December 31, 2025. These changes will weaken the graduated driver licensing (GDL) law and threaten the safety of novice teen drivers and all who share the roads with them.

In the U.S., teenagers drive less than all but the oldest drivers, yet their number of crashes and crash deaths are disproportionately high.¹ Per mile driven, teen drivers have crash rates nearly four times higher than drivers ages 20 and older.² According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), teens are more likely than older drivers to misjudge dangerous situations or to not be able to recognize hazardous situations. Teens tend to speed, follow too closely, and underestimate speed and stopping distances. Moreover, compared with other age groups, teens have the lowest rate of seat belt use.

Compelling research shows that comprehensive GDL laws, which include a supervised driving requirement, reduce teen driver involved crashes and save lives. According to a national study conducted by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS), a supervised driving requirement of 40 hours was associated with a 10 percent lower rate of insurance collision claims among 16 and 17 year-old drivers.³ Given the value of supervised driving, 48 states plus the District of Columbia enacted this requirement. The IIHS GDL Crash Reduction Calculator estimates that if North Carolina eliminates the requirement to log 60 hours of supervised driving for limited learner's permits, fatal crashes could increase by four percent and collision claims by 18 percent.⁴ The best practice for supervised driving is 70 hours which, if adopted, could reduce fatal crashes by one percent and collision claims by an estimated three percent.⁵ North Carolina should be increasing, not eliminating, the supervised driving requirement.

In addition to preventing fatalities and injuries, GDL laws save states money. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) estimated the economic cost of police-reported crashes involving drivers between 15 and 20 years old in the U.S. was \$40.8 billion in 2002.⁶ When adjusted for inflation, that amounts to \$73.2 billion in 2025 dollars.⁷ The annual cost of traffic crashes in North Carolina is over \$12 billion – amounting to a “crash tax” of \$1,148 on each North Carolina resident according to a 2019 analysis.⁸ If these costs were updated for inflation alone, in 2025 they would equate to \$15.2 billion and \$1,449 respectively.⁹

This legislation also would reduce the holding period for a limited learner's permit from nine months to six months through the end of the year. This comes after reducing the holding period to six months during the pandemic—half of the pre-pandemic requirement of 12 months. While that change was billed as temporary, the 12-month requirement was not restored and instead reduced to nine months. In 2019, the last full year before the pandemic, 154 drivers ages 15-20 died in motor vehicle crashes in North Carolina.¹⁰ In 2023 that number was

199, a 29 percent increase which is much higher than the increase in overall traffic fatalities (7 percent) during that time.¹¹ Clearly, more needs to be done to enhance, and not further weaken, the GDL law.

While a few additional months of supervised driving may seem inconsequential, the data shows it is not. Extra time gaining driving experience in lower risk settings makes a big difference in safety. A minimum learner's permit holding period of five to six months reduces fatal crash rates by 9 percent; however, extending the holding period to nine months to a year results in a 21 percent reduction.¹²

Based on research, the IIHS has identified the current best practices in the U.S. for novice drivers to include a minimum permit age of 16 and a minimum intermediate license age of 17. Delaying the minimum age for obtaining a learner's permit was associated with lower fatal crash rates for 15- to 17-year-olds combined, and a one-year delay (e.g., from age 15 to 16) reduced the fatal crash rate by 13 percent.¹³

The public is keenly aware and concerned about novice, young drivers. A poll Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety (Advocates) commissioned in 2024 found that 90 percent of Americans are concerned and 50 percent of Americans are "extremely" or "very" concerned about novice, young drivers.¹⁴ The region with the most concern was the South where 61 percent of respondents were "extremely" or "very" concerned.¹⁵

From 2014-2023, traffic fatalities in North Carolina increased 22 percent.¹⁶ The GDL law should not be weakened and exacerbate this tragic trend. We urge you to reject HB 584.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Catherine Chase, President
Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety

Janette Fennell, Founder and President
Kids and Car Safety

Torine Creppy, President
Safe Kids Worldwide

¹ Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, Fatality Facts 2022: Teenagers website, available at <https://www.iihs.org/topics/fatalitystatistics/detail/teenagers>.

² Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS), Teenagers, available at <https://www.iihs.org/topics/teenagers#by-the-numbers>.

³ Trempel, Rebecca E. *Graduated Driver Licensing Laws and Insurance Collision Claim Frequencies of Teenage Driver.*, IIHS, November 2009.

⁴ IIHS GDL Crash Reduction Calculator available at: <https://www.iihs.org/topics/teenagers/gdl-calculator>.

⁵ IIHS GDL Crash Reduction Calculator available at: <https://www.iihs.org/topics/teenagers/gdl-calculator>.

⁶ Traffic Safety Facts 2002: Young Drivers, NHTSA, DOT HS 809 619, available at

<https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/809619>.

⁷ CPI Inflation Calculator, US Bureau of Labor Statistics, <https://data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/cpicalc.pl>; Based on Jan. 2002 to Jan. 2025 value.

⁸ 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>.

⁹ CPI Inflation Calculator, BLS, Jan. 2019 to Jan. 2025, available at <https://data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/cpicalc.pl>.

¹⁰ State Traffic Safety Information for North Carolina, NHTSA, available at <https://cdan.dot.gov/STSI/stsi.htm>.

¹¹ State Traffic Safety Information for North Carolina, NHTSA, available at <https://cdan.dot.gov/STSI/stsi.htm>.

¹² Masten, S.V., Fodd, R.D., Marshall, S.W., Graduated driver licensing program component calibrations and their association with

fatal crash involvement, *Accident Analysis & Prevention*, V. 57, Aug. 2013, pp. 105-113, available at

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/23672925/>.

¹³ Graduated Licensing Laws and Fatal Crashes of Teenage Drivers: A National Study, Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, June

2010, available at <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/20544567/>.

¹⁴ Engine's Caravan Survey Public Opinion Poll, December 2024, available [here](https://www.iihs.org/topics/teenagers#by-the-numbers).

¹⁵ Engine's Caravan Survey Public Opinion Poll, December 2024, available [here](https://www.iihs.org/topics/teenagers#by-the-numbers).

¹⁶ State Traffic Safety Information for North Carolina, NHTSA, available at <https://cdan.dot.gov/STSI/stsi.htm>.