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FOUNDATION



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Society for Advancement of
Violence and Injury Research



February 17, 2026

The Honorable Justin Slaughter, Chairperson
The Honorable Kelly M. Cassidy, Vice-Chairperson
The Honorable Patrick Windhorst, Republican Spokesperson
House Judiciary - Criminal Committee
Illinois House of Representatives
State Capitol, 401 S. Spring Street
Springfield, Illinois 62706

Dear Chairperson Slaughter, Vice-Chairperson Cassidy and Republican Spokesperson Windhorst:

As representatives of leading public health and safety organizations working to advance roadway and auto safety laws that prevent deaths and injuries and contain crash costs, we urge you to support the enactment of House Bill (HB) 4333. This legislation will lower the *per se* limit of alcohol-impaired driving to .05 percent blood alcohol concentration (BAC), deter drunk driving and save lives.

Drunk driving is a deadly, growing and costly threat to Illinois families. In 2024, there were an overall estimated 1,208¹ fatalities on state roads according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) which is a 21 percent increase since 2015.² Additionally, thirty-two (32) percent of Illinois traffic deaths in 2023 involved drunk driving which exceeds the national average and was a higher proportion than in most neighboring states.³ Moreover, traffic fatalities involving drunk driving increased 32 percent in the state from 2014 to 2023.⁴

In addition to the physical and emotional impact, these crashes impose a tremendous financial burden. Traffic crashes cause nearly \$14 billion of economic damage to Illinois annually which is equivalent to a “crash tax” of \$1,103 per resident, according to a 2019 analysis.⁵ When updated for inflation alone, in 2026, costs would equate to approximately \$18.1 billion.⁶ Additionally, in 2019, drunk driving crashes cost employers across the country \$8 billion each year with 81 percent of those costs coming in crashes while off the job.⁷ When updated for inflation alone, the costs escalate to \$10.3 billion each year.⁸

The impact of drunk driving is clearly measurable at .05 percent BAC by research which shows significant impairment.⁹ Drivers have reduced coordination, decreased ability to track moving objects, difficulty steering and diminished response to emergency situations.¹⁰ The risk of being killed in a single-vehicle crash with BACs of .05 to .079 percent is up to 21 times higher than for drivers without measurable alcohol.¹¹

Drunk driving clearly is a serious problem that requires solutions which are strongly supported by research¹² and the public health and safety community. Advancing .05 percent BAC legislation will reduce dangerous drinking and driving across all levels of impairment, including high BAC, to prevent deaths and injuries. If all states adopted a .05 percent BAC or lower law, fatal alcohol crashes are estimated to decline 11 percent, and 1,790 lives would be saved each year.¹³ Lowering the limit of BAC is a countermeasure successfully employed around the world but underused in the United States. More than 100 countries have .05 percent BAC or lower limits. In these countries average alcohol consumption is equal or higher to that in the United States, but they have less deaths caused by drunk driving.¹⁴

Opponents may claim that lowering the BAC will impact the economy by decreasing alcohol sales, but reducing BAC limits does not discourage alcohol consumption.¹⁵ It does discourage driving after drinking. When Utah reduced its BAC limit from .08 to .05 percent, alcohol sales and tourism went up while drunk driving arrests went down.¹⁶

The data are clear, the lifesaving benefits are certain and the justification for action is compelling. We urge you to take this critical step to seriously address and prevent drunk driving by advancing HB 4333. Every death caused by an alcohol-related crash on Illinois roads forever changes the lives of families and communities and can be prevented. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Catherine Chase, President
Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety

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Honorable T. Bella Dinh-Zarr, Former Vice Chair
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Janette Fennell, Founder and President
Kids and Car Safety

Marcus Kowal and Mishel Eder, Co-founders
Liam's Life Foundation
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Erin Doherty, Regional Executive Director
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Karen Sisson, Board Member
SAFE Coalition

Marilena Amoni, Former Associate Administrator
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

Additional organizations that are not signers but recommend or support .05 percent BAC policy:

American Medical Association (AMA)
American Public Health Association (APHA)
Association for the Advancement of Automotive Medicine (AAAM)
Governors Highway Safety Association (GHSA)
National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine (NASEM)
National Road Safety Foundation
National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB)
Remove Intoxicated Drivers (RID)
Safe States Alliance
Society for Public Health Education
Transportation Alternatives
Vision Zero Network
World Health Organization (WHO)

¹ Traffic Safety Facts: Crash Stats, Early Estimate of Motor Vehicle Traffic Fatalities in 2024, NHTSA, April 2025, DOT HS 813 710, available at <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813710>.

² State Traffic Safety Information for Illinois, NHTSA, available at <https://cdan.dot.gov/STSI/stsi.htm>.

³ State Traffic Safety Information for Illinois, NHTSA, available at <https://cdan.dot.gov/STSI/stsi.htm>; Traffic Safety Facts: 2023 Data, Alcohol-Impaired Driving, NHTSA, May 2025, DOT HS 813 713, available at <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813713>.

⁴ State Traffic Safety Information for Illinois, NHTSA, available at <https://cdan.dot.gov/STSI/stsi.htm>.

⁵ 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>.

⁶ CPI Inflation Calculator, BLS, January 2019 to January 2026 dollars, available [here](https://www.bls.gov/inflation-calculator/).

⁷ Cost of Motor Vehicle Crashes to Employers 2019; Network of Employers for Traffic Safety, available at <https://trafficsafety.org/road-safety-resources/public-resources/cost-of-motor-vehicle-crashes-to-employers-2019/>.

⁸ CPI Inflation Calculator, BLS, January 2019 to January 2026 dollars, available [here](https://www.bls.gov/inflation-calculator/).

⁹ NTSB, .05 BAC Safety Briefing Facts, February 2017, available [here](https://www.ntsb.gov/safety/briefing-facts/).

¹⁰ MADD, *What is .08?* Available at: <http://www.madd.org/drunken-driving/about/understanding-08.html>.

¹¹ Fell, Jim C., Voas, Robert B, *The effectiveness of a 0.05 blood alcohol concentration (BAC) limit for driving in the United States*, PIRE. June 2014.
¹² Ibid.

¹³ NORC: Fell JC & Scherer M, Estimation of the Potential Effectiveness of Lowering the Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC) Limit for Driving from 0.08 to 0.05 Grams per Deciliter in the United States, 2017. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2E5pliq>.

¹⁴ NTSB, .05 BAC Safety Briefing Facts, February 2017, available [here](https://www.ntsb.gov/safety/briefing-facts/).

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Leaver, Jennifer, *The State of Utah's Travel and Tourism Industry 2019*, Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute University of Utah, September 2020. Utah

Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control, Annual Reports 2018, 2019 and 2020, available at: <https://abc.utah.gov/about-dabc/annual-reports/>. 17th Annual DUI Report to the Utah Legislature, Utah Commission on Criminal and Juvenile Justice, 2019. Available at: <https://le.utah.gov/interim/2019/pdf/00004834.pdf>.