



ADVOCATES  
FOR HIGHWAY  
& AUTO SAFETY



February 9, 2026

The Honorable Evan P. Shanley, Chair  
The Honorable Mary Messier, First Vice Chair  
The Honorable Arthur J. Corvese, Second Vice Chair  
House State Government and Elections Committee  
Rhode Island General Assembly  
82 Smith Street  
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

Dear Chair Shanley, First Vice Chair Messier and Second Vice Chair Corvese:

Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety (Advocates) is 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. The Skilled Motorcyclist Association - Responsible, Trained and Educated Riders, Inc. (SMARTER) is a non-profit association dedicated to increasing motorcyclist safety by compiling and disseminating data-driven research to support decision makers in implementing effective strategies. Since its founding in 1913, the National Safety Council (NSC) has been America's leading nonprofit safety advocate. As a mission-based organization, NSC works to eliminate the leading causes of preventable death and injury, with a focus on the workplace and roadways. NSC creates a culture of safety to protect people from hazards and injuries in the workplace and beyond, so they can live their fullest lives. We strongly support Senate Bill (S.) 2286/House Bill (H.) 7382 to require all motorcycle operators to wear helmets and thereby harmonize the law to ensure helmet use by all riders.

Motorcycles are the most hazardous form of motor vehicle transportation<sup>1</sup>, and fatalities remain historically high. In 2023, 6,335 motorcyclists were killed in the U.S., the highest number of fatalities on record.<sup>2</sup> An estimated additional 82,564 motorcyclists were injured in the same year.<sup>3</sup> Early estimates for 2024 indicate a two percent decrease in motorcyclist fatalities compared to 2023.<sup>4</sup> Despite this projection, the number of motorcycle crash fatalities in 2023 is nearly three times the historic low of 2,116 motorcycle crash deaths in 1997.<sup>5</sup> Per mile travelled, the fatality rate for motorcycle riders is nearly 28 times greater than passenger vehicle occupants.<sup>6</sup> In 2023, 16 motorcyclists were killed in Rhode Island according to the most recently available data from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), a 60 percent increase since 2014.<sup>7</sup> Sixty-nine (69) percent of motorcyclists killed in Rhode Island in 2023 were not wearing a helmet.<sup>8</sup>

In addition to the physical and emotional burden, traffic crashes involving motorcycles exact a financial toll. Annually, motorcycle rider crashes cost the United States nearly \$17 billion in economic impacts and \$107 billion in societal harm based on 2019 data.<sup>9</sup> Accounting for inflation alone, in 2025, this would equate to \$21.5 billion in economic impacts, and over \$135 billion in societal harm.<sup>10</sup> Serious injuries and fatalities accounted for 83 percent of total comprehensive costs of motorcyclist crashes, compared to 60 percent for all motor vehicle crashes.<sup>11</sup>

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.<sup>12</sup> Updating for inflation only, in 2025 this would equate to \$26.8 billion in societal harm prevented and another \$11.9 billion prevented if all riders had worn helmets.<sup>13</sup> Helmets reduce the cost of medical treatment, length of hospital stay and probability of long-term disability for motorcyclists injured in a crash.<sup>14</sup> In states with an all-rider helmet use 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.<sup>15</sup>

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.<sup>16</sup> Helmets are vital as they reduce the risk of head injury by 69 percent and risk of death by 42 percent.<sup>17</sup> 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.<sup>18</sup> According to NHTSA, in 2023, there were 8.6 times as many unhelmeted fatalities (1,937 fatalities) in states without a universal helmet use law compared to states with a universal helmet law (225 fatalities).<sup>19</sup> These states were similar in total

populations.<sup>20</sup> An 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 all-rider motorcycle helmet use in place.<sup>21</sup> IIHS further estimated that three lives would have been saved in 2022 alone if Rhode Island had an all-rider helmet use law.<sup>22</sup>

The efficacy of all-rider helmet use laws is proven by the tragic consequences in states that have repealed all-rider helmet use laws. After repeal of their state’s universal helmet requirement, the motorcyclist fatality rate increased 35 percent in Florida, 50 percent in Kentucky and 100 percent in Louisiana.<sup>23</sup> In Michigan, which repealed its all-rider helmet use law in 2012, there would have been 26 fewer motorcyclist deaths (a 21 percent reduction) that year if the law was still in place.<sup>24</sup> More recently in Missouri, motorcyclist fatalities increased 26 percent from 123 in 2019, prior to repeal, to 166 in 2021, the first full year without the law and remained elevated in 2022.<sup>25</sup> Nebraska’s repeal took effect in 2024, and preliminary state data shows a 32 percent increase in motorcyclist fatalities relative to the five-year average.<sup>26</sup>

With motorcyclist fatalities at historically high levels, we urge you to support and advance S. 2286/H. 7382. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Catherine Chase, President  
Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety

Xu Simon, President and CEO  
SMARTER

Lorraine Martin, CEO  
National Safety Council

cc: House State Government and Elections Committee members

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<sup>1</sup> The Economic and Societal Impact of Motor Vehicle Crashes, 2019 (Revised), NHTSA, Feb. 2023, DOT HS 813 403, available at <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813403>.

<sup>2</sup> Traffic Safety Facts: 2023 Data, Motorcycles, National Highway and Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), July 2025, DOT HS 813 732, available at <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813732>.

<sup>3</sup> Traffic Safety Facts: 2023 Data, Motorcycles, National Highway and Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), July 2025, DOT HS 813 732, available at <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813732>.

<sup>4</sup> Traffic Safety Facts, Crash Stats: Early Estimates of Motor Vehicle Traffic Fatalities And Fatality Rate by Sub-Categories in 2024, NHTSA, May 2025, DOT HS 813 729, available at <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813729>.

<sup>5</sup> Traffic Safety Facts 2023: A Compilation of Motor Vehicle Traffic Crash Data, NHTSA, Aug. 2025, DOT HS 813 738, available at <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813738>.

<sup>6</sup> Traffic Safety Facts: 2023 Data, Motorcycles, National Highway and Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), July 2025, DOT HS 813 732, available at <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813732>.

<sup>7</sup> State Traffic Safety Information for Rhode Island, NHTSA, available at <https://cdan.dot.gov/stsi.htm>.

<sup>8</sup> Traffic Safety Facts: 2023 Data, Motorcycles, National Highway and Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), July 2025, DOT HS 813 732, available at <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813732>.

<sup>9</sup> 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>.

<sup>10</sup> CPI Inflation Calculator, BLS, January 2019 to January 2025 dollars, available at <https://data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/cpicalc.pl>.

<sup>11</sup> 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>.

<sup>12</sup> 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>.

<sup>13</sup> CPI Inflation Calculator, BLS, January 2019 to January 2025 dollars, available at <https://data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/cpicalc.pl>.

<sup>14</sup> Costs of Injuries Resulting from Motorcycle Crashes: A Literature Review, NHTSA, November 2002, DOT HS 809 242.

<sup>15</sup> 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.

<sup>16</sup> 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>.

<sup>17</sup> 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.

<sup>18</sup> 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>.

<sup>19</sup> Traffic Safety Facts: 2023 Data, Motorcycles, NHTSA, Jul. 2025, DOT HS 813 732, available at <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813732>.

<sup>20</sup> 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>.

<sup>21</sup> The human cost of allowing unhelmeted motorcycling in the United States, Oct. 2024, IIHS, available at: <https://www.iihs.org/topics/bibliography/ref/2317>.

<sup>22</sup> IIHS (2024, October 16). Lax helmet laws have killed more than 20,000 motorcyclists, study shows [Press release], available at <https://www.iihs.org/news/detail/lax-helmet-laws-have-killed-more-than-20-000-motorcyclists-study-shows>.

<sup>23</sup> The human cost of allowing unhelmeted motorcycling in the United States, Oct. 2024, IIHS, available at: <https://www.iihs.org/topics/bibliography/ref/2317>.

<sup>24</sup> Flannagan CA, Analysis of Motorcycle Crashes: Comparison of 2012 to Previous Years, 18th Michigan Traffic Safety Summit, 2013.

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- <sup>25</sup> Traffic Safety Facts: 2019 Data, Motorcycles, National Highway and Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), September 2021 (Revised), DOT HS 813 112, available at <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813112>; Traffic Safety Facts: 2021 Data, Motorcycles, National Highway and Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), June 2023 (Revised), DOT HS 813 466, available at <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813466>.
- <sup>26</sup> “Nebraska seeing an increase in motorcycle fatalities, data shows”. First Alert 6. (2024, September 4), available [here](#).