



ADVOCATES
FOR HIGHWAY
& AUTO SAFETY

March 17, 2026

The Honorable Gary A. Winfield, Co-Chair
The Honorable Steven J. Stafstrom, Co-Chair
Joint Committee on Judiciary
Legislative Office Building, Room 2300
Hartford, Connecticut 06106

Dear Co-Chair Winfield and Co-Chair Stafstrom:

Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety (Advocates), which 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, supports Senate Bill (SB) 484 to curb distracted driving. The measure would prohibit the playing of a video on a mobile electronic device (that is in the full view of the driver) and expand the definition of a mobile electronic device to include video converters. Considering the prevalence of distracted driving crashes, this measure is critical and timely.

Across the U.S. in 2023, 3,275 people were killed in crashes involving a distracted driver, accounting for eight percent of all crash fatalities.¹ Nonoccupants (pedestrians, bicyclists, and others) accounted for 19 percent of distraction-affected fatalities in 2023.² An additional estimated 324,819 people were injured in distraction-affected crashes in 2023.³ It's important to note that distracted driving crashes are known to be underreported due to a variety of challenges.

Distracted driving not only results in crashes, deaths and injuries, but it also unnecessarily expends taxpayer dollars. Nationally, crashes in which at least one driver was identified as being distracted imposed an economic cost of \$98.2 billion in 2019.⁴ In 2018 alone, distracted driving crashes cost employers nearly \$19 billion.⁵ The annual cost of traffic crashes in Connecticut is \$6.1 billion – amounting to a “crash tax” of \$1,712 on each Connecticut resident according to a 2019 analysis which is the third highest of any state.⁶ When updated for inflation alone, in 2026, costs would equate to \$7.9 billion.⁷

Wireless communication device distraction, which includes manual, visual and cognitive components, is a serious issue contributing to crashes. According to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS), “brain activity associated with visual processing and attention is suppressed when drivers are cognitively distracted ([Bowyer et al., 2009](#); [Strayer et al., 2006](#); [Just et al., 2008](#)).”⁸ As a result, “cognitive distractions can lead to so-called ‘inattention blindness’ in which drivers fail to comprehend or process information from objects in the roadway even when they are looking at them ([Strayer et al., 2003](#)).”⁹ Additionally, the American Automobile Association’s (AAA) Foundation for Traffic Safety found that the use of electronic devices while driving can result in mental distractions that persist for up to 27 seconds after returning to the driving task.¹⁰

Smart phone capability and usage and the range of distracting electronic communication platforms and options have grown rapidly. These devices can now easily accomplish myriad uses without holding or consistently physically engaging with a device (voice-to-text and/or dash mounted options), yet these uses may continue to foster driver distraction. To meaningfully address the prevalence and dangers of distracted driving, visual, manual and cognitive distractions should be restricted for drivers. SB 484 updates the law to ban a dangerous practice to help keep drivers focused on the driving task.

Each distracted driving death and serious injury irrevocably changes the lives of families and communities in Connecticut and across the nation. With traffic fatalities up 24¹¹ percent from 2014 to 2023, we urge you to support SB 484 and similar legislation, like House Bill (HB) 5463, to curb distracted driving.

Sincerely,

Catherine Chase, President

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- ¹ Overview of Motor Vehicle Crashes in 2023, NHTSA, Apr. 2025, DOT HS 813 705, available at <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/Publication/813705>.
 - ² Traffic Safety Facts Research Note: Distracted Driving 2023, Apr. 2025, NHTSA, DOT HS 813 703, available at <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813703>.
 - ³ Traffic Safety Facts Research Note: Distracted Driving 2023, Apr. 2025, NHTSA, DOT HS 813 703, available at <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813703>.
 - ⁴ 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>.
 - ⁵ Cost of Motor Vehicle Crashes to Employers 2019, NETS, 2018 data expressed in 2019 \$, available at <https://trafficsafety.org/?ddownload=26813>.
 - ⁶ 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>.
 - ⁷ CPI Inflation Calculator, BLS, Jan. 2019 to Jan. 2026, available at <https://data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/cpicalc.pl>.
 - ⁸ IIHS HLDI, Topics, Distracted Driving, available at: <https://www.iihs.org/topics/distracted-driving>.
 - ⁹ IIHS HLDI, Topics, Distracted Driving, available at: <https://www.iihs.org/topics/distracted-driving>.
 - ¹⁰ AAA Newsroom, New Hands-free Technologies Pose Hidden Dangers for Drivers, October 22, 2015, available [here](#).
 - ¹¹ State Traffic Safety Information for Connecticut, NHTSA, available at <https://cdan.dot.gov/stsi.htm>.