



March 10, 2026

The Honorable John Blanton, Chair
The Honorable Mary Beth Imes, Vice Chair
The Honorable Ashley Tackett Laferty, Ranking Minority Member
House Committee on Transportation
Kentucky General Assembly
702 Capital Avenue
Frankfort, Kentucky 40601

Dear Chair Blanton, Vice Chair Imes and Ranking Minority Member Laferty:

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) 28 to curb distracted driving. Considering the prevalence of distracted driving crashes, SB 28 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 Kentucky is \$6.2 billion – amounting to a “crash tax” of \$1,378 on each Kentucky resident according to a 2019 analysis and much higher than the national average of \$1,035.⁶ When updated for inflation alone, in 2026, costs would equate to nearly \$8 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

Distracted driving’s impact and incidence must be addressed. Smart phone capability and usage and the range of distracting electronic communication platforms and options (including apps, social media, gaming, video chatting) 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 28 would prohibit handheld use of mobile electronic devices while driving and update the texting ban to reflect technological advances in mobile electronic device capability and usage, including prohibiting the watching of images such as videos, movies, video calls and games while driving. These actions are consistent with the recommendations of *Using Electronic Devices While Driving: Legislations and Enforcement Implications*, by the Transportation Research Board (TRB) which comprehensively reviewed the issue of distracted driving and state distracted driving laws.¹¹ The report identifies key components in a model distracted driving law including:

- Provisions that prohibit handheld use of devices and visually distracting uses including the use of “an electronic device to stream, record, or broadcast video.” This includes when the device is used hands-free.
- A ban on holding or supporting an electronic device.

The public is keenly aware and concerned about distracted driving. A poll Advocates commissioned in December 2024 found that 96 percent of Americans are concerned about distracted driving, with 83 percent “extremely” or “very” concerned.¹²

In 2024, there were an overall estimated 714 traffic fatalities in Kentucky according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA).¹³ Each distracted driving death and serious injury irrevocably changes the lives of families and communities in Kentucky. We urge you to advance SB 28, a vital measure to curb distracted driving.

Sincerely,



Catherine Chase, President

cc: House Committee on Transportation members

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 Using Electronic Devices While Driving: legislations and Enforcement Implications (2021), TRB, available [here](#).

¹² Engine’s Caravan Survey Public Opinion Poll, December 2024, available [here](#).

¹³ 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>.