



ADVOCATES  
FOR HIGHWAY  
& AUTO SAFETY

June 2, 2026

The Honorable Kristina D. Roegner, Chair  
The Honorable Theresa Gavarone, Vice Chair  
The Honorable Willis E. Blackshear, Jr., Ranking Member  
Senate General Government Committee  
Ohio Senate  
77 South High Street  
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Dear Chair Roegner, Vice Chair Gavarone and Ranking Member Blackshear:

Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety (Advocates), 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, opposes Senate Bill (SB) 419. This measure will reduce the minimum driving age by six months to 15 years old. In doing so, it will erode the graduated driver licensing (GDL) law and threaten the safety of novice teen drivers and all who share the roads with them.

In 2025 an estimated 1,120 people lost their lives in traffic crashes on Ohio roads.<sup>1</sup> In addition, 135 drivers ages 15-20 were involved in fatal traffic crashes in 2024.<sup>2</sup> These tragedies are clear evidence that the state's GDL law should be improved rather than weakened.

Teenagers drive less than all but the oldest drivers, yet their number of crashes and crash deaths are disproportionately high.<sup>3</sup> Per mile driven, teen drivers have crash rates nearly four times higher than drivers aged 20 and older.<sup>4</sup> According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), teens are more likely 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.

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.<sup>5</sup> When adjusted for inflation, that amounts to \$74.9 billion in 2026 dollars.<sup>6</sup> The annual cost of traffic crashes in Ohio has surpassed \$12 billion – amounting to a “crash tax” of \$1,036 on each Ohioan according to a 2019 analysis.<sup>7</sup> When updated for inflation alone, in 2026 costs would equate to \$15.7 billion.<sup>8</sup>

The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety's (IIHS) GDL Crash Reduction Calculator estimates that if Ohio reduces the minimum driving age to 15, fatal crashes would increase by seven percent and total collision claims by two percent among novice drivers.<sup>9</sup>

Conversely, we support the provisions of SB 419 which increase the temporary instruction permit validity period by six months and require that it be held for a year before a driver can be eligible for a probationary license. However, we cannot support these changes in a context where the minimum driving age is decreased by six months. Based on IIHS research, the best practices for GDL 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.<sup>10</sup> Rather than exacerbate the dangers associated with teen driving, we urge you to instead consider making these changes to upgrade safety.

With well over 1,000 annual traffic fatalities in Ohio, SB 419 and all other similar legislation, such as House Bill (HB) 463 and HB 411, should be rejected. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Catherine Chase, President

cc: Senate General Government Committee Members

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- <sup>1</sup> Traffic Safety Facts: Crash Stats, Early Estimate of Motor Vehicle Traffic Fatalities in 2025, NHTSA, Apr. 2026, DOT HS 813 800, available at <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813800>.
  - <sup>2</sup> State Traffic Safety Information for Ohio, NHTSA, available at <https://cdan.dot.gov/stsi.htm>.
  - <sup>3</sup> Insurance Institute for Highway Safety. 2013. [Unpublished analysis of 2008 data from the U.S. Department of Transportation's National Household Travel Survey, General Estimates System, and Fatality Analysis Reporting System].
  - <sup>4</sup> Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS), Teenagers, available at <https://www.iihs.org/topics/teenagers#by-the-numbers>.
  - <sup>5</sup> Traffic Safety Facts 2002: Young Drivers, NHTSA, DOT HS 809 619, available [here](#).
  - <sup>6</sup> CPI Inflation Calculator, US Bureau of Labor Statistics, <https://data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/cpicalc.pl>; Based on Jan. 2002 to Jan. 2026 value.
  - <sup>7</sup> 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>.
  - <sup>8</sup> CPI Inflation Calculator, US Bureau of Labor Statistics, <https://data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/cpicalc.pl>; Based on Jan. 2019 to Jan. 2026 value.
  - <sup>9</sup> IIHS. GDL Crash Reduction Calculator available at: <https://www.iihs.org/topics/teenagers/gdl-calculator>.  
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/>.