

BEFORE THE HOUSE TRANSPORTATION AND PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE
DECEMBER 13, 2017
PROPONENT TESTIMONY ON H.B. 293

Mr. Chair Green, Vice Chair Greenspan, Ranking Member Sheehy, and members of the committee, I am Ric Oxender of Oxender and Associates. I am here today representing the Ohio Conference of AAA Clubs. The Ohio Conference is composed of Ohio's six AAA Clubs and has a membership of almost 3 million Ohio motorists.

There is carnage on our highways. Teen automobile crashes are occurring at an alarming rate, and in Ohio they are on the rise. In 2016 alone, there were 8,300 injuries and fatalities involving teen drivers. That is up 15% from 2014. Also, consider the fact that in less than 40% of teen driver related fatalities, it was the teen driver that was killed. More than 60% of the fatalities in teen driver crashes were either a passenger or the occupant of another vehicle. It's NOT just teens that are in jeopardy. It is all motorists that are sharing the highways.

Currently, at age 15½, a teen can obtain a temporary permit. Then, after 6 months of supervised driving, they may apply for a probationary permit. Many teens, depending on when they begin their learner period, may well drive during winter conditions without EVER having driven under supervision in those conditions. These factors along with the inherent dangers of nighttime driving have led AAA and the members of our coalition to bring forth this legislation.

The conclusion our coalition has reached is that Ohio's graduated driver licensing system (GDL) for young drivers has not kept up with research on teen drivers and no longer reflects a modern understanding of the best way to keep teen drivers—and the rest of us—safe. The simple updates proposed in this bill will bring Ohio's licensing system in line with those that have produced the greatest declines in teen crashes anywhere in the U.S.

By changing two provisions of our licensing system, we can SIGNIFICANTLY reduce teen crashes and the resulting deaths and injuries. The first conclusion is that our teens do NOT have enough time behind the wheel while being supervised by a licensed driver. Six months is just not enough time for novice drivers to grasp the many facets of driving in an increasingly complex and dangerous roadway environment. The other important provision is our current protection against the risks of nighttime driving. Ohio's current night driving provision for newly licensed drivers fails to protect them from 75% of the night driving risk—that which falls between 9 pm and midnight. **The realities are that Ohio teens presently do not have enough supervised driving to learn all they need, and our current provision to protect them from nighttime risks as they first begin driving without adult accompaniment. has almost no effect.**

This legislation addresses both of those realities. The bill extends the temporary permit period from six months to one year, and expands coverage of the protective limit on nighttime driving for newly licensed drivers to include the highest risk hours—those from 9 P.M. to midnight.

The research evidence is quite clear that changing these two provisions will lead to a significant reduction in teen driver crashes along with the deaths and injuries they cause. These facts must NOT be ignored .

Mr., Chairman, I will attempt to answer any questions you or the committee may have. But at this point I would like to mention that the next witness is Dr. Robert Foss of the University of North Carolina. He has devoted the past 25 years to the study of teen driving. He is the “de facto” father of this country’s current approach to young driver licensing. So with your permission, I may defer some questions to Dr. Foss after he presents his testimony. Thank you Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee.