



ADVOCATES  
FOR HIGHWAY  
& AUTO SAFETY

May 26, 2020

The Honorable Nathan H. Manning, Chair  
The Honorable Andrew O. Brenner, Vice Chair  
Ohio Senate Local Government, Public Safety and Veterans Affairs Committee  
Senate House  
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Dear Chairman Manning and Vice Chairman Brenner:

Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety (Advocates), an alliance of consumer, safety, medical and public health groups, and insurance companies working together to prevent motor vehicle crashes, save lives, reduce injuries and contain crash costs, urges you to pass Senate Bill (SB) 285. This legislation will improve safety on Ohio roads by upgrading the state's distracted driving law to primary enforcement and adding a ban on all handheld mobile device use. Current state law is secondary enforcement which significantly hinders police efforts as they are required to first observe an additional violation before stopping the driver for texting while driving. Considering the prevalence of distracted driving crashes, this legislation is critical and timely.

In 2018, crashes on Ohio roads claimed the lives of 1,068 people, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). Over the last ten years, 10,725 people were killed in traffic crashes in the state and early reports for 2019 indicate that traffic fatalities will surpass 2018 by an estimated eight percent. Clearly, motor vehicle crashes are a serious public health epidemic in dire need of effective solutions including SB 285.

Sending or receiving a text message causes a driver's eyes to be off the road for an average of 4.6 seconds. When driving 55 miles per hour, that time period is equivalent to driving the entire length of a football field while wearing a blindfold (Virginia Tech Transportation Institute (VTTI)). In 2018, 2,841 people were killed and approximately 400,000 injured nationally in distracted driving crashes (NHTSA). These figures are known to be under-reported due to numerous challenges including differences in police crash report coding and database limitations. A survey performed by Nationwide Insurance found four out of ten respondents claimed to have been hit or nearly hit due to a distracted driver. Additionally, a recent roadside survey performed by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) found that manipulation of devices while driving is up 57 percent over the prior survey (2014).

Distracted driving not only results in crashes, deaths and injuries, but it also unnecessarily expends taxpayer dollars. Crashes in which at least one driver was identified as being distracted cost \$40 billion annually (NHTSA). Nationally, distracted driver crashes cost businesses \$8.2 billion in 2013 (Network of Employers for Traffic Safety, 2016). The annual economic costs of all crashes in Ohio are \$10.125 billion (NHTSA).

Advocates urges you to pass SB 285 to curb dangerous and deadly distracted driving and improve road safety.

Sincerely,

Catherine Chase, President

CC: The Honorable Tina Maharath, Ranking Minority Member