

Senator Nathan H. Manning
Chairman, Senate Local Government, Public Safety and Veterans Affairs Committee
1 Capitol Square
Ground Floor
Columbus, OH 43215

May 26, 2020

Via email

RE: NAMIC Support for SB 285

Chairman Manning and Members of the Committee:

The National Association of Mutual Insurance Companies (NAMIC) appreciates the opportunity to share its support for SB 285, a bill that would significantly improve distracted driving laws in Ohio and help provide vital safety protections for drivers on Ohio's roads.

By way of background, NAMIC is the largest property and casualty insurance trade association in the country, with more than 1,400 member companies. NAMIC supports regional and local mutual insurance companies as well as some of the country's largest national insurers. NAMIC member companies write \$268 billion in annual premiums across all lines nationally, and our members account for 46 percent of the national automobile insurance market. NAMIC has 74 member companies domesticated in Ohio, with more than 200 member companies doing business in the Buckeye state. Our members take a keen interest in distracted driving legislation and NAMIC supports prohibitions on the use of handheld devices while driving.

NAMIC supports SB 285 as it would significantly improve the safety of Ohio's roads by eliminating a number of distracted driving-related practices. By prohibiting drivers from having physical contact with their phone while driving or otherwise operating a motor vehicle, while permitting emergency calls and voice to text technology to be used, SB 285 would provide strong guardrails for safe vehicle operation. Further, the bill's primary enforcement mechanism means that these vital safety steps will be enforced across Ohio's roads.

SB 285 is timely effort as National Highway Traffic Safety Administration data indicates that, despite ever-increasing vehicle safety technology, Ohio's number of traffic fatalities has risen in five of the last six years. SB 285 would help to stem this tide and provide enhanced protections to Ohio's citizens by creating a primary "hands free" law. SB 285 would also bring Ohio in line with a number of other states that have instituted hands free laws and seen drastic decreases in their traffic fatality rates.

In short, SB 285 is very likely to save lives and do so in the least restrictive way possible, while providing a primary enforcement mechanism. As such, NAMIC supports the adoption of SB 285 and continued efforts by the Ohio Legislature to improve the safety of Ohio's roads.

If you or any of the members of the committee have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "A. Kirkner".

Andrew Kirkner
Regional Vice President – Ohio Valley Mid-Atlantic
National Association of Mutual Insurance Companies
Akirkner@NAMIC.org