

May 26, 2020

The Honorable Nathan H. Manning
Chair, Local Government, Public Safety and Veterans Affairs Committee
The Ohio Senate
1 Capitol Square
Columbus, OH 43215

Dear Mr. Chairman,

As the primary national trade association for home, auto, and business insurers across the country, the American Property Casualty Insurance Association (APCIA) is pleased to add its support to the wide range of law enforcement personnel, safety organizations and transportation professionals endorsing Senate Bill 285.

Auto safety is a top concern for auto insurers and APCIA. New technologies are making today's cars safer for drivers and passengers, but distracted driving remains a deadly threat to drivers in Ohio and across the country. In recent years, the country has seen a sharp increase in auto accident-related deaths, with an increase of nearly 14 percent between 2013 and 2017 – the biggest increase in more than a quarter century. Traffic fatalities in Ohio have risen five of the past six years due in large part to the fact that more people have smartphones and are increasingly using them while driving.

Senate Bill SB 285 seeks to stem that tide by modernizing Ohio's texting law and requiring "hands-free" use – prohibiting drivers from having physical contact with their phones or other wireless devices while driving or stopped in a traffic lane. If passed, this legislation could help reduce crashes, save lives, and make Ohio roads safer.

Nationally, more than 20 states have passed similar hands-free laws, and these states have seen reductions in traffic deaths. Of the 14 states that enacted these laws before 2018, 11 saw a decrease in their traffic fatality rates within two years after passing and enforcing new laws, according to data from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

APCIA applauds Senators Kunze and O'Brien for their efforts to make Ohio's roads safer. We have been working with state leaders across the country to enact strong, enforceable distracted driving laws such as SB 285. We believe the key to saving lives rests in consumer awareness, behavior change and strong enforcement. Making handheld device usage a primary offense with meaningful consequence, while arming law enforcement with the tools to curb this deadly behavior is the right thing to do.

We support SB 285 and urge its enactment into law. Tackling distracted driving is no easy task, but APCIA believes it is a task that we must take on, and we must take on together.

We greatly appreciate your consideration of our perspective. Please contact me directly at 847-553-3678 or via email at adam.shores@apci.org or APCIA's Ohio counsel, Steve Buehrer at 614-365-4107 or via email at buehrer@carpenterlipps.com with any questions. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Shores', written in a cursive style.

Adam R. Shores