

My Statement in Support of HB-51

Good morning Chairman McColley, Vice Chairman Johnson, Ranking Member Antonio and all committee members. My name is John Gordon, and I am from Marion County, Ohio. I am a 42 year veteran of law enforcement with special training through the Ohio State Highway Patrol as a Technical Crash Investigator. In 2008 following the death of my only child who was also in law enforcement, I became a Traffic Safety Advocate and created a Distracted Driving Safety Program called "Rusty's Story." I have presented a safety message to 33,000 people in four states about the dangers of distracted driving. My son's fatal crash had two major contributing factors that caused his preventable death; the at-fault driver swerving his vehicle into my son's traffic lane 27' prior to impact and the use of a hand-held electronic device which distracted the driving of the at-fault driver. I cannot be certain which one of these factors outweighed the other; however, Center Line Rumble Strips most likely would have alerted the other driver of the impending fatal consequence.

Left-of-Center crashes may be caused by a number of factors: falling asleep, impaired driving, and distracted driving, such as using electronic devices (handheld or hands-free), eating and drinking, and grooming to name a few. Electronic hand-held devices actually go hand-in-hand with Left of Center crashes. A person who uses a phone while driving will normally hold it in their right hand to talk or read a message thus leaving the left hand to drive. The slightest amount of force will move the steering wheel downward, thus moving the vehicle to the left. But typically a person will use both hands to text or enter a phone number, and that leaves the vehicle to drive itself. Also the American Automobile Association in a recent study determined that Apple's Siri was the most distracting electronic application used in motor vehicles. The mandate creating Center Line Rumble Strips on all state roadways will save lives as the noise and vibration will alert the driver to focus on the task at hand, driving.

Documentation from the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) states that milled rumble strips provide significant reductions in injury crashes for vehicles that leave the designated lane by ten to 24 percent on rural freeways and 26 to 46 percent on two-lane rural roads.

During my training with the National Safety Council, the National Transportation Safety Board, and the USDOT, I was reminded of what most people seem to forget and that is that our brain makes us do everything, and our brain cannot multi-task. Our brain can only focus on one thing at a time. So when any type of distraction

occurs while driving, we need to have our full faculties to avoid a collision. Center Line Rumble Strips will help regain focus and lower reaction time. Some automobile manufacturers have introduced lane departure warning systems (LDW) in some of their vehicles. When the system detects that a vehicle is veering out of its lane, an audio, visual, or other alert warns the driver of the unintentional lane shift so that the driver can maintain proper control; however, it is important to note that these systems do not take full control. Additionally this system fails to notify the driver if the roadway has no painted lane markings. On a final note, it will be many years before this technology is in every vehicle on the roadway.

The USDOT reports that Center Line Rumble Strips are one of the proven countermeasures that will reduce the risks of crossing center line crashes. The noise and vibration produced by the rumble strips will alert drivers when they leave the traveled path.

The State of Minnesota conducted a Center Line Rumble Strips test for the safety effects on two-wheeled and three-wheeled vehicles. They concluded that there was no noticeable impact on the safe operation of these vehicles.

Automobile manufactures have been making vehicles safer yearly since the beginning. Within the past decade, the introduction of ABS brakes, sensors for backing, braking, seat belt warnings, to name a few, should be reducing the fatality rate. However, according to the NTSB, highway deaths soared by 10 % during the first six months of 2016 as compared with 2015. This came after the nation saw a 7.2 % increase in highway deaths in 2015, which was the largest percentage increase in the previous 50 years. Center Line Rumble Strips is one way that the State of Ohio can do its part in reducing these figures.

The Ohio Insurance Institute has ranked Ohio 8th nationwide for the highest number of fatal crashes caused by distracted driving including the use of cell phones in 2017. That figure is inexcusable, and our laws must improve to prevent the tragic, and oftentimes preventable, loss of life. If Center Line Rumble Strips saves one life, then this legislation would be worthwhile.

A few legislators will argue that the cost factor of this mandate is too high, but I ask you how do you place a dollar value on a human life, and what is the value of your family's life?

Statement of:
John P. T. Gordon

5291 Morral Kirkpatrick Rd. W.
Morral, Ohio 43337
(740) 465-9212