



Jim Hughes

State Representative, 24th House District

Sponsor Testimony

Sub. House Bill 95

Local Government, Public Safety, and Veterans Affairs

September 12, 2017

Chairman Uecker, Vice Chair Wilson, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the Senate Local Government, Public Safety, and Veterans Affairs committee, thank you for giving Representative Seitz and myself the opportunity to present to you Sub. House Bill 95. This legislation is a near identical reintroduction of Senate Bill 146 from the 131st General Assembly. It received unanimous, bipartisanship support in the Ohio Senate, as it was reported from the committee 9-0 and by the full chamber 32-0.

During the 130th Ohio General Assembly, I sponsored legislation to establish September as "Safe Driving Awareness" month. Now, I, along with my colleague Bill Seitz, are continuing our efforts to push to promote safe driving by introducing House Bill 95, which is aimed at targeting distracted driving.

In today's world, current technology has aided in the creation of a society that is constantly communicating, whether it be texting, emailing, searching directions, surfing the web or listening to music. The dangers of taking part in these activities while behind the wheel are a harsh reality on our roads. With all of these high tech devices and society wanting to be connected at all times, it's so easy to get distracted when behind the wheel.

The Ohio State Highway Patrol reports that there were 13,980 crashes in 2016 that involved distracted driving, resulting in 26 deaths and 4,960 injuries.

Sub. House Bill 95 would create an enhanced penalty for "distracted driving" that can only come into play when a driver is pulled over for another moving violation, which is currently a minor misdemeanor offense under Ohio law. Additionally, a law enforcement officer would only be able to issue a citation for "distracted driving" if they witness the offense at the same time as another moving violation, such as running a stop sign or red light. The legislation requires that the person cited for distracted driving pay a fine of one hundred dollars for each offense.

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This legislation received proponent testimony in the House from Dom Tiberi, the Ohio Association of Professional Firefighters, AAA, the Ohio Department of Public Safety, the Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers, the Ohio Prosecuting Attorneys Association, Property Casualty Insurers, MORPC, Ohio Insurance Agents, the Ohio Insurance Institute, Nationwide, and State Auto Insurance Companies. No opposition testimony was presented, or submitted, to the committee during the four public hearings that this legislation received.

Distracted driving is extremely dangerous and unfortunately all too common. It is our hope that this legislation will encourage drivers to remain focused on the road and help save lives. To be clear, our legislative goal is to encourage Ohio drivers to be cautious when driving and to think of their safety before anything else. No text message or phone call is worth losing your life or harming someone else. A bad decision in a split second can impact you or your family for the rest of your life or others. There is no 'reset' button to hit to change the outcome.

Chairman Uecker and members of the Senate Local Government, Public Safety, and Veterans Affairs committee, thank you for your consideration of Sub. House Bill 95. After Representative Seitz has presented his remarks, we would be happy to address any questions that the committee might have.

