



# NATIONWIDE CHILDREN'S®

*When your child needs a hospital, everything matters.*

February 16, 2021

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Chairman Oelslager and members of the House Finance Committee:

Thank you for allowing me to provide testimony on HB 74, which would classify distracted driving as a primary offense. It also comprehensively and clearly bans all handheld cellphone use including calling, texting, gaming, accessing Internet-based content, app use, and so forth. My name is Dr. Motao (Matt) Zhu and I am a professor of Pediatrics at Nationwide Children's Hospital and The Ohio State University College of Medicine.

I have been an active researcher focusing on traffic safety, including distracted driving, for the past 19 years. I am the author or co-author of more than with 80 peer-reviewed articles in scientific journals. I have directed multiple federal grants to determine, across multiple states, the impact of distracted driving laws on cellphone use behaviors, traffic injuries, and deaths. As a member of the Policy Committee of the Association for the Advancement of Automotive Medicine, I lead the efforts to recommend public policy on distracted driving. In addition, I am the research coordinator on driver safety on the Transportation Research Board of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine.

Our research supports that classifying distracted driving as a primary offense is more effective in reducing traffic crashes, injuries and deaths, as opposed to classifying it a secondary offense. Our analysis of driver fatalities from 1999 through 2016 across the United States found that comprehensive handheld bans allowing primary enforcement are associated with fewer fatalities, but secondary enforcement is not. Previous research has reported that primary enforcement increases the effectiveness of seatbelt laws, relative to secondary enforcement. With secondary enforcement, drivers may feel immune from enforcement, which removes the mechanism through which enforcement works

- convincing drivers they are likely to be cited. Secondary enforcement is also a major barrier to police enforcement.

Our research supports that comprehensive handheld cellphone use laws save lives and reduce the societal costs associated with distracted driving. As of January 2021, only 24 states have comprehensively banned all handheld cellphone use while driving. Our research has found that comprehensive handheld bans have prevented about 140 driver deaths and 13,900 driver injuries annually in the U.S. Distracted driving-related crashes are a major burden on our emergency medical and trauma systems and result in significant medical expenditures for treatment and rehabilitation. The associated societal costs are \$1.2 billion for distracted driving-related crashes in Ohio every year. We support and applaud Ohio's efforts to comprehensively and clearly ban all handheld cellphone use including calling, texting, gaming, accessing Internet-based content, app use, and so forth.

In addition, we would like to support **an amendment** to HB 74. This amendment will make Ohio's roads safer through one simple, but important, adjustment to Ohio's young driver licensing system. It will lengthen the temporary instruction permit period from 6 to 12 months. This amendment would make Ohio's roads safer by providing novice teen drivers the experience they need to be safe drivers. Ohio's young driver licensing system has not kept up with the latest research on teen crashes and how to prevent them. Consequently, nearly 38,000 injuries and fatalities occurred in Ohio teen driver crashes between 2015 and 2019, according to the Ohio Department of Transportation. That's an average of 20 injuries and fatalities every day. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention cites inexperience as the number one reason teen drivers crash. Providing teens with the chance to practice driving with an adult in all four of Ohio's seasons is invaluable. Parents of teen drivers in states with a 12-month permit are extremely supportive. This amendment will modernize Ohio's young driver licensing system, provide teens with greater protection, give their parents more peace of mind and make the roads safer for everyone. A modern GDL keeps Ohio's teens, families and communities safe and strong.

On behalf of Nationwide Children's Hospital, thank you for allowing me to comment on this important legislation that will help protect Ohio's children.



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