



Brian D. O'Connell
Regional Director, State
Government Relations

General Motors
124 W. Allegan St., Ste 1420
Lansing, MI 48933
Phone: 517-377-2077

Testimony on House Bill 74 – Distracted Driving

Good morning Chair Oelslager, Vice Chair Plummer, Ranking member Crawley and members of the House Finance Committee. My name is Brian O'Connell, regional director for government relations for General Motors. GM strongly supports Governor DeWine's proposed language concerning distracted driving in House Bill 74.

No matter what the cause, distracted driving poses a risk for all motorists and passengers on our nation's highways. Over the past few years, the statistics have been consistent with about 3,000 deaths and 400,000 accidents annually attributed to distracted driving. In fact, 1 in 4 car accidents are caused by texting and driving. We all have likely witnessed other motorists driving distracted and it only takes a slight error for a 4,000 lb. vehicle to cause serious bodily harm or death. That is why GM supports legislation which promotes hands free devices in automobiles. The technology is there, and it will save lives.

According to information compiled by NHSTA, AAA, and telecommunication companies, more than 303 million Americans have cell phones. Ninety-six percent own a mobile phone while 81 percent own a smart phone. The rapid adoption of smartphone tech has impacted many aspects of our lives. Our ability to access the internet, social media, and videos while "on the go" is certainly a convenience, but presents an increasing danger for motorists, their passengers and pedestrians across the country and here in Ohio. It is estimated that at any given time during daylight hours, more than 800,000 vehicles are being driven by someone using a handheld device. This is a conservative estimate and the number is likely much higher.

More than a decade of research indicates that using a mobile device or smartphone while driving causes the brain to shift between two tasks, slowing reaction times and narrowing our field of vision. Distracted drivers, while engaged in the behavior, exhibit similar behaviors to drunk drivers including slow reaction times, erratic speeds, weaving and sudden braking.

Page 2

I want to stress that hands-free use of devices while driving does not mean risk free, but it starts to break down the cycle. It does so by prohibiting drivers from frequently touching electronic devices while driving. It also communicates to drivers that device use is not safe while driving in Ohio. The language in HB 74 will help change behaviors and make our roads safer for all Ohio citizens.

For GM, reducing and eliminating distracted driving aligns with our vision of zero crashes, zero emissions and zero congestion. Safety is our top priority and our company policies encourage and enforce this behavior. For example, GM employees are prohibited from using a handheld device while driving and we go a step further by restricting employees and contractors from using wireless devices while walking at any of our facilities. The reason is simple: we know distractions lead to accidents.

HB 74 will help reduce distracted driving in Ohio, which in turn will reduce crashes and save lives. I thank you for your time and encourage members of the committee to support this important language.

Thank you