



To: Senate Committee on Transportation
From: Kara Hitchens, Manager, Public and Government Affairs, AAA Club Alliance
Date: May 22, 2024
Re: Support of SB 178 (Prohibit certain actions around a distressed vehicle)

Chairwoman Kunze, Vice Chair Reineke, Ranking Member Antonio, and members of the Senate Transportation Committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer remarks in **support of SB 178**.

I am Kara Hitchens, Manager of Public and Government Affairs for AAA Club Alliance, speaking on behalf of all the AAA Clubs in Ohio. Since AAA's founding in 1902, the not-for-profit, fully tax-paying organization has been a leader and advocate for the safety and security of all travelers. AAA proudly serves over 2.5 million members in Ohio. On behalf of the AAA Clubs in Ohio, we would like to thank you for the opportunity to offer support for legislation that will improve road safety for drivers as well as those maintaining Ohio roads.

SB 178 works to protect both drivers who are stranded on the side of the highway dealing with a disabled vehicle and other drivers on the road.

By disabled vehicles, we are referring to vehicles on the side of a roadway that are displaying hazard warning signal lamps, road flares or caution signals, including traffic cones, caution signs or reflective triangles.

It is very common to see disabled vehicles on the side of the road. The drivers and occupants may be changing a tire, the hood is propped open, possibly waiting for a tow truck. Whatever the case, this applies to vehicles with people inside or outside their vehicle waiting for help.

SB 178 says if a driver is on a two-lane highway and comes upon a disabled vehicle, the driver must proceed with caution by slowing down as they pass the disabled vehicle. The bill language states that if the driver is on a multi-lane highway, like an interstate, and comes upon a disabled vehicle, the driver needs to switch to the opposite lane(s), if possible, or slow down as they pass the disabled vehicle.

This may sound like common sense but sadly, disabled vehicles are not protected within the current Ohio 'Move Over' laws, and we have seen the tragic consequences.

While there is no crash category for fatalities with occupants of disabled vehicles, Ohio crash statistics estimates in just six years from 2018-2023 there were 148 fatalities, averaging 24

deaths a year. That number was arrived by looking at fatal pedestrian strikes on highway or freeway. Very likely most of those pedestrians are the result of a disabled vehicle.

Ohio already has a “slow down or move over” law protecting emergency vehicles, tow trucks, utility and maintenance vehicles, but it makes no distinction for stranded motorists.

This bill, however, does not apply to a vehicle left unattended or abandoned on the side of the road. Those vehicles are usually marked by law enforcement with an orange tag to be towed.

We respectfully urge your support of the bill. Thank you again for the opportunity to speak on this matter and I am happy to answer questions at the appropriate time.

Respectfully,

Kara Hitchens
Manager, Public and Government Affairs
AAA Club Alliance
khitchens@aca.aaa.com