

Senate Transportation Committee
Interested Party Testimony – HB 54
Jason Wrather, AVP Innovation, Grange Mutual Casualty Company

Chairman Patton, Vice Chair Schaffer and Ranking Member Antonio – thank you for the opportunity to provide interested party testimony on HB 54.

My name is Jason Wrather. I have the privilege of leading the Innovation arm at Grange Insurance Company. My work focuses on developing new technologies that extend beyond the traditional boundaries of insurance. That mission has brought me here today to share my passion for modernizing driver training in Ohio.

For over a year now, I have been working with the General Assembly and the Department of Public Safety on the modernization of driver education in Ohio. I am testifying today to ask that the current language in the bill be augmented by language that will update driver education in Ohio.

Ohio's driver training methods have remained largely unchanged for a quarter century. I believe that we have an opportunity to advance driver training in a manner that benefits everyone involved. A true win-win scenario for all parties...and as you know, those opportunities don't come around very often.

Our extensive research has identified several challenges facing Ohioans across the state:

- Accessibility – Many communities lack convenient access to driving schools forcing families to travel large distances to access driver training resources.
- Availability – Many communities encounter limited scheduling options at our driver training schools often resulting in long waiting periods.
- Affordability – Everyone is experiencing the variable cost of driver training today.

These challenges parallel the challenges articulated by the Department of Public Safety and the Governor's office.

Language was added to HB 54 in the House Committee regarding driver training in Ohio. Specifically, this language reads: (B)(1) Each person under eighteen years of age applying for a driver's license issued in this state and each person eighteen years of age or older applying for an initial limited term license in this state shall present satisfactory evidence of having successfully completed ... A driver training course approved by the director of public safety. And further states: (3) Each person eighteen years of age or older applying for an initial limited term license in this state also shall present, on a form prescribed by the registrar, an

affidavit signed by an adult who holds a current valid driver's or commercial driver's license issued by this state that the applicant has acquired at least fifty hours of actual driving experience, with at least ten of those hours being at night, accompanied by the signing adult.

I would like to enhance these provisions by introducing an option for consumers and driving schools to utilize a mobile app for assistance in training that complements and unifies our existing driver training infrastructure across all ages. Rest assured. A licensed adult will still need to be in the car at all times. The technology will simply “ride along” as an additional coach.

I am asking that you add language to the bill that will modernize driver training in Ohio. I am pursuing an amendment to the bill through this committee and will be submitting it for your consideration. It will have no impact on the state budget.

In closing, I would like to leave you with three important thoughts.

1. **Safety comes First**– The amendment language requires that this technology be reviewed and approved by the Department of Public Safety prior to any use
2. **Consumer Choice is Preserved** – The amendment will provide new driver training options for Ohioans while keeping traditional driver training available to all.
3. **Jobs are Protected** – This technology serves as a compliment to, not a replacement for, our valuable driving instructors and schools.

Ohio was a national leader with the introduction of the Graduated Driver License System back in 1998. Now we have an opportunity to lead again with a Modernized Driver Training change in Ohio law. I am happy to answer any questions.