

May 6th, 2021

Ohio Conference of AAA Clubs
100 Rosa Parks Drive
Akron, Ohio 44311

Chairman LaRe, Vice Chair Swearingen, Ranking Member Leland and members of the House Criminal Justice Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of the Ohio Conference of AAA Clubs in support of House Bill 27, which enhances the penalties for violating current laws against driving with an unsecured vehicle load and causing an injurious or fatal accident as a result. Presently, the statutory punishment in Ohio for an unsecured load that releases road debris, including those that cause accidents, is a minor misdemeanor charge punishable by up to a \$150 fine.

House Bill 27 increases the base penalty for failing to secure a load to a minor misdemeanor with a \$500 fine if no physical harm is caused to a person or property; if physical harm occurs, the bill increases the base penalty to a third-degree misdemeanor punishable by a fine of \$2,500 and any other penalty that may be imposed, including a jail term of 60 days.

AAA believes that all drivers, no matter what type of vehicle they are driving, have an obligation to drive responsibly and not endanger the lives and welfare of others. By failing to properly secure loads, resulting road debris creates a traffic safety hazard that may result in injury, death, or significant property damage when drivers run over or swerve to avoid them, or when the debris is thrown into the path of a vehicle.

To avoid these traffic safety hazards that jeopardize that safety of the community, AAA advocates for the enactment of legislation that mandates appropriate coverage and securing of vehicles which haul dirt, sand, gravel, trash, garbage or any other particulate material which may become detached. House Bill 27 supports this goal by providing increased penalties, and in turn, accountability.

The bill establishes a more appropriate punishment for a negligent driver that fails to properly secure a load and causes an injury or death. If passed, Ohio would join at least 16 other states in imposing possible jail time for serious violations of this statute.

Reducing traffic safety hazards from road debris resulting from improperly secured loads is an important step in keeping Ohio's roadways and communities safe. We urge your support of House Bill 27. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

Sincerely,

Stephen Nielson
Partner
Byers, Minton & Associates