



HB 283

Proponent Testimony

House Criminal Justice Committee

June 10, 2021

Chairman LaRe, Vice Chair Swearingen, Ranking Member Leland and members of the House Criminal Justice Committee my name is Tom Balzer and I am the President and CEO of the Ohio Trucking Association (OTA). Collectively, we represent over 1,000 trucking, moving, logistics and warehouse companies and allied vendor members. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to provide testimony today in support of HB 283, which would make using an electronic device while driving a primary offense and strengthen penalties on those drivers who drive distracted. This legislation will deter the use of wireless devices while driving, which in turn will save the lives of Ohioans.

According to the State Highway Patrol, traffic fatalities on Ohio roads have been increasing, despite the fact that cars are safer now than ever before. This trend was most apparent during the COVID-19 pandemic, when travel in Ohio was down by over 15%, yet traffic deaths actually rose 7% compared to the previous year. Distracted driving has certainly contributed to the problem. Our truck drivers witness distracted driving by those in passenger vehicles on a daily basis, which not only puts their lives in danger, but also the lives of everyone else on the roadway. The 47 states (including the District of Columbus) that have implemented similar distracted driving legislation have seen dramatic drops in fatality rates – some even approaching a 50% reduction.

The distracted driving statistics are downright startling:

- According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) in 2019 nationally, over 3,100 people were killed and an additional 424,000 injured in crashes involving distracted drivers.
- According to the Ohio State Highway Patrol, from 2013 through 2019, more than 91,000 distracted driving crashes occurred throughout the state, resulting in more than 47,000 injuries and 305 deaths.

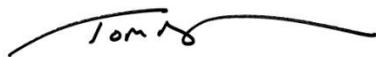
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- NHTSA data shows that texting while driving is 6x more likely to cause an accident than driving drunk.
- Answering a text distracts a driver for about five seconds. Traveling at 55 mph, that's enough time to travel the length of a football field.
- A recent poll showed 78% percent of drivers support a ban on texting while driving and 88% would be willing to obey the new law ([Public Opinion Strategies Poll](#)).

While the goal of this legislation is to save lives, it is also important to note that there is also a financial benefit to cracking down on distracted driving. Each traffic death costs Ohio about \$1.7 million and each serious injury approximately \$157,000 in monetary losses associated with medical care, emergency services, property damage and lost productivity. These costs are particularly important to those of us in the transportation industry. Crashes lead to delays, which cost businesses that rely on the logistics industry time and money. Additionally, when a distracted driver hits a commercial vehicle, the commercial vehicle is often held responsible, increasing litigation and insurance costs. Reducing distracted driving will keep our drivers safer and allow them to deliver their goods on-time, without unexpected delays and expenses.

HB 283 is an important piece of legislation and one that the Ohio Trucking Association is proud to support as it will save the lives of Ohioans. We would like to thank the sponsors for their work on this important legislation. We urge your support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom Balzer". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Thomas A. Balzer, CAE
President and CEO
Ohio Trucking Association