

June 8, 2021

The Honorable Jeff LaRe
Chair, Criminal Justice Committee
The Ohio House of Representatives
1 Capitol Square
Columbus, OH 43215

Dear Mr. Chairman,

The American Property Casualty Insurance Association (APCIA), the nation's primary national trade association for home, auto, and business insurers across the country, places safety on our roads and highways as a top priority. We are proud to stand with a wide range of law enforcement personnel, safety organizations and transportation professionals to support House Bill 283 by Representatives Abrams and Lampton.

New technologies are making today's cars safer for drivers and passengers, but distracted driving remains a deadly threat to drivers in Ohio and across the country. In recent years, the country has seen a sharp increase in auto accident-related deaths, with an increase of nearly 14 percent between 2013 and 2017 – the biggest increase in more than a quarter century. Traffic fatalities in Ohio have been on the rise in recent years due in large part to the fact that more people have smartphones and are increasingly using them while driving.

The distracted driving provisions in HB 283 would help stem the tide of rising traffic fatalities by modernizing Ohio's texting law and requiring "hands-free" use – prohibiting drivers from having physical contact with their phones or other wireless devices while driving or stopped in a traffic lane. If passed, this legislation could help reduce crashes, save lives, and make Ohio roads safer.

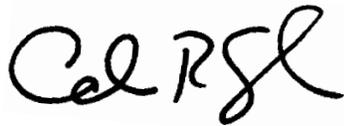
Ohio has the opportunity to join the ranks of other states that have strengthened their distracted driving laws in recent years. States that passed such measures saw reductions in traffic deaths. Of the 14 states that enacted these laws before 2018, 11 saw a decrease in their traffic fatality rates within two years after passing and enforcing new laws, according to data from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Since 2018, more states have passed primary hands-free laws—it is time to add Ohio to the list.

APCIA strongly believes that the key to saving lives rests in consumer awareness, behavior change and strong enforcement. Making handheld device usage a primary offense with meaningful consequence, while arming law enforcement with the tools to curb this deadly behavior is the right thing to do.

We urge Ohio to enact these strong safe driving provisions. Tackling distracted driving is no easy task, but APCIA believes it is a task that we must take on, and we must take on together.

We greatly appreciate your consideration of our perspective. Please contact me directly at 847-553-3678 or via email at adam.shores@apci.org or APCIA's Ohio counsel, Steve Buehrer at 614-365-4107 or via email at buehrer@carpenterlipps.com with any questions. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Adam R. Shores". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Adam R. Shores