



NATIONWIDE CHILDREN'S®

When your child needs a hospital, everything matters.

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

Thank you for allowing me to provide testimony on HB 283, which would enact a hands-free and safe driving law in Ohio. All dangerous handheld cellphone use while driving will not be allowed including calling, texting, gaming, accessing Internet-based content, app use, and so forth. This bill would enable Ohioans to enjoy hands-free cellphone use and safe driving.

My name is Dr. Motao (Matt) Zhu and I am a professor of Pediatrics at Nationwide Children's Hospital and The Ohio State University College of Medicine. I have been an active researcher focusing on traffic safety, including distracted driving, for the past 19 years. I have authored 90 peer-reviewed articles in scientific journals. I have directed multiple federal grants to determine, across multiple states, the impact of distracted driving laws on cellphone use behaviors, traffic injuries, and deaths. As a member of the Policy Committee of the Association for the Advancement of Automotive Medicine, I lead the efforts to recommend public policy on distracted driving. In addition, I am the research coordinator on driver safety on the Transportation Research Board of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine.

Handheld cellphone use while driving may involve manual distraction (hands off the steering wheel) and visual distraction (eyes off the road), and is associated with increased risk for crashes and injuries. A large study within the United States that continuously monitored 3,500 drivers (The Second Strategic Highway Research Program Naturalistic Driving Study SHRP 2 NDS) found that the risk of a crash resulting in property damage or injury when drivers used handheld cellphones was 3.6 times the risk of a crash when drivers were alert, attentive, and sober (i.e. model driving behavior). When comparing specific driving behaviors to model driving behavior, the risk of a crash was 6.1 times for handheld texting, 12.2 times for dialing a number, 2.7 times for browsing on a handheld phone, and 2.2 times for handheld talking.

Our research finds that hands-free laws are associated with 7% fewer driver deaths nationally, but calling-only bans, texting-only bans, texting plus phone-manipulating bans, or calling and texting bans are not associated with fewer driver deaths. Hands-free laws could lead to greater driver compliance as they send a clear message that cellphones are not to be handled at all while driving. Drivers may doubt that the texting-only ban is enforceable in Ohio. For example, drivers may believe that if stopped by a police officer, they can avoid a citation by claiming they were calling, not texting. A hands-free law is easier to enforce, because it is impossible for police to differentiate texting from dialing and other phone use.

Our research supports that hands-free laws save lives and reduce the societal costs associated with distracted driving. Our research has found that hands-free laws have prevented about 140 driver deaths and 13,900 driver injuries annually in the U.S. Distracted driving-related crashes are a major burden on our emergency medical and trauma systems and result in significant medical expenditures for treatment and rehabilitation. The associated societal costs for distracted driving-related crashes are \$1.2 billion in Ohio every year, which equals to \$2,300 every minute.

On behalf of Nationwide Children's Hospital, thank you for allowing me to comment on this important legislation that will help protect children and Ohioans from distracted driving.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M Zhu'.

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