



Brian D. O'Connell
Regional Director, State
Government Relations

General Motors
124 W. Allegan St., Ste 1420
Lansing, MI 48933
Phone: 517-377-2077

Testimony on House Bill 283 – Distracted Driving

Chairman LaRe, Vice Chairman Swearingen, Ranking Member Leland and members of the House Criminal Justice Committee my name is Brian O'Connell, regional director for government relations for General Motors. GM strongly supports House Bill 283 regarding distracted driving in Ohio.

No matter what the cause, distracted driving poses a risk for all motorists and passengers on our nation's highways. Over the past few years, the statistics have been consistent with about 3,000 deaths and 400,000 accidents annually attributed to distracted driving. In fact, 1 in 4 car accidents are caused by texting and driving. We all have likely witnessed other motorists driving distracted and it only takes a slight error for a 4,000 lb. vehicle to cause great bodily harm or death. That is why GM supports legislation to promote hands-free device use in automobiles. The technology is there, and it will save lives.

According to information compiled by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, AAA, and telecommunication companies, more than 303 million Americans have cell phones. Ninety-six percent own a mobile phone while 81 percent own a smart phone. The rapid adoption of smartphone technology has impacted many aspects of our lives. Our ability to access the internet, social media, and videos while "on the go" present an increasing danger for motorists, passengers and pedestrians across the country and right here in Ohio. It is estimated that at any given time during daylight hours, more than 800,000 vehicles are being driven by someone using a handheld device. This is a conservative estimate and the number is likely much higher.

More than a decade of research indicates that using a mobile or smartphone while driving causes the brain to shift between two tasks, which slows reaction time and narrows our field of vision. Distracted drivers, while engaged in this behavior, exhibit similar behaviors to drunk or impaired drivers including slow reaction times, erratic speeds, weaving and sudden breaking.

Hands-free use of devices while driving does not mean risk free, but it starts to break the cycle. It does so by prohibiting drivers from frequently touching electronic devices while driving. It also communicates to drivers that device use is not safe while driving in Ohio. The language in HB 283 will help change behaviors and make our roads safer for all Ohio citizens.

For GM, reducing and eliminating distracted driving aligns with our vision of zero crashes, zero emissions and zero congestion. Safety is our top priority and our company policies encourage and enforce this behavior. For example, we are prohibited from using a handheld device while driving and employees and contractors also have restrictions on using devices while walking at any of our facilities. The reason is simple: we know distractions lead to accidents.

HB 283 will help reduce distracted driving in Ohio, which in turn will reduce crashes and save lives. I thank you for your time and I encourage members of the committee to support this language.