



Testimony to the House Criminal Justice Committee

Thursday, September 23rd 2021

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Chairman LaRe, Vice-Chairman Swearingen, Ranking-Member Leland, ladies and gentlemen of the Ohio House Criminal Justice Committee, thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak on behalf of HB283.

Bike Cleveland's mission is to create a region that is sustainable, connected, healthy, and vibrant by promoting bicycling and advocating for safe and equitable transportation for all. Bike Cleveland fully supports HB283 and making it a primary offense to use electronic-wireless communication devices while driving.

We also support the establishment of reporting requirements for law enforcement agencies to track the race of offenders ticketed, this is crucial to ensuring the law is not inequitably enforced, but we request that this data be collected on all traffic stops related to distracted driving, not just ones where a ticket is issued. We ask that this data be made available to the public.

HB283 would make driving while handling many electronic wireless device a primary offense for adult drivers and will increase fines for drivers who habitually use devices while driving.

This bill is crucial to ending distracted driving and saving lives on Ohio's roads. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), driving a vehicle while texting is six times more dangerous than intoxicated driving. The Transport Research Laboratory found that writing a text message slows driver reactions by 35 percent, while drinking alcohol up to the legal limit slows reactions by 12 percent.

According to the NHTSA 10% of fatal crashes and 15% of serious injury crashes in the US in 2015 were distraction related. That is 3,477 people killed and an estimated additional 391,000 injured in crashes involving distracted drivers. In Ohio between 2015-2019 according to data from ODPS 276 people died in crashes that were caused due to distracted driving and 2,755 were seriously injured (in 2020 there was over 3,800 crashes the resulted in fatality or injury that included distraction as a contributing cause). In addition from Jan 2019-Sept 2021 there were 3,82 distracted driving crashes in Cuyahoga County, the highest in the state.

While there is widespread understanding that distracted driving is dangerous (a recent AAA survey found that over 80% of people find texting or emailing while driving a serious threat to safety), many people still engage in those behaviors (the same survey found that over 40% of drivers had read an email or text within the last 30 days). Sharing the road is much harder when people are not looking at the road. Effective distracted driving laws and enforcement are key to discouraging this dangerous behavior.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this written testimony regarding Bike Cleveland's support for HB283.