

February 17, 2021

Kimberly Schwind  
Senior Manager, Public Affairs  
AAA Ohio Auto Club  
Ohio Conference of AAA Clubs  
90 E Wilson Bridge Rd., Worthington, OH 43085

**Proponent Testimony for HB 74  
12-Month Learner's Permit**

Chairman Oelslager, Vice Chair Plummer, Ranking Member Crawley, and members of the Ohio House Finance Committee; I am Kimberly Schwind, Senior Manager, Public Affairs at AAA Ohio Auto Club and I am representing the Ohio Conference of AAA Clubs. The Ohio Conference is composed of the five AAA Clubs in Ohio, and represents approximately 3 million Ohioans, all constituents of yours.

I am writing today to ask for consideration of an amendment to HB 74 that would modernize Ohio's young driver licensing system with one simple, but important adjustment

- Lengthening the temporary instruction permit from 6 to 12 months.

The truth is, Ohio has a big problem. Motor vehicle crashes remain the number one killer of teenagers. This epidemic is killing our children and tearing our families apart. Here are some facts:

- Young drivers are consistently overrepresented in motor vehicle crashes – New teen drivers ages 16-17, are three times as likely as adults to be involved in a deadly crash (AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety).
- Nearly 38,000 injuries and fatalities occurred in Ohio teen driver crashes between 2015 and 2019. That's an average of 20 injuries and fatalities every day (Ohio Department of Transportation crash data).
- Ohio is now 7<sup>th</sup> in the country for the highest number of teen fatality and injury crashes (Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety).
- The number one reason teens crash is inexperience (The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention).

What's even more sobering is that these crashes do not just impact teen drivers. ALL road users are in danger. Two-thirds of those killed or injured in crashes involving teen drivers are people other than the teen driver (AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety)!

A modern young driver licensing system is a proven strategy for reducing teen crashes, making travel safer for young drivers and everyone who shares the roads with them. Unfortunately, Ohio's system for licensing young drivers hasn't kept up with the latest research on teen driver crashes and how to prevent them. Consequently, we continue to see too many teen driver crashes on our roads! We believe this is unacceptable; especially when we have the solution to save lives right in front of us.

Please keep in mind that this proposal is about valuable, behind-the-wheel experience. Currently Ohio teens are not gaining the experience they need with an adult to become safe drivers.

A 12-month permit phase ensures every new driver has the chance to practice driving with an adult in all four seasons. Ohio is currently in the midst of one of the worst winters it has had in years with record snow fall, ice and freezing temperatures leading to hazardous conditions in urban and rural areas. If even the most skilled driver has trouble navigating treacherous roadways, how can we expect a teen driver with limited experience to do so? The unfortunate fact is that there may be some newly licensed teen drivers who have never gotten experience driving in extreme weather conditions.

Having a well-rounded driving experience in all types of weather is invaluable. Parents of teen drivers in states that have a 12-month permit are extremely supportive. After North Carolina enacted a 12-month learner's permit, 95% of parents said it was just right or not long enough.

Numerous reputable studies have proven that comprehensive Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) systems were reliably associated with a reduction in fatal crashes for new teen drivers. A 12-month learner's permit and intermediate licensing stage starting at 16.5 to 17 years-old are two of the most effective GDL components, proven to reduce teen crashes. . Data from other states also proves that these provisions do save lives:

- In North Carolina the initial effects of a young driver's license system, similar to the one being proposed here, saw a 57 percent reduction in 16-year-old fatal crashes within the first two years.

We have to remember that this is about saving lives. It's not about convenience. Ask any parent that has lost a child in a car crash and they would tell you that an additional six months is *nothing* compared to a lifetime without their son or daughter.

As a parent myself, I believe that we intrinsically want to protect our children. We are scared to death to let our children out on the road alone; especially when we know the facts.

This amendment only extends the learners permit period. It does not change anything in regard to passenger limits or nighttime protections that are in current law. This proposal (H.B. 106 from the 133<sup>rd</sup> GA) has broad support and cleared the House Transportation Committee last GA. Supporters include AAA, Akron Children's Hospital, American Academy of Pediatrics, American Property Casualty Insurance Association, Better Ohio Teen Drivers Inc., DRVN, Nationwide Children's Hospital, Nationwide Insurance, National Safety Council, Ohio Association of Chiefs of Police Ohio Health, Ohio PTA, Safe Kids Ohio, State Auto Insurance, State Farm Insurance and many other safety advocates. There are no known opponents.

Modernizing Ohio's young driver licensing system with this one adjustment will provide teens with greater protection, give their parents more peace of mind, and make the roads safer for everyone. A modern young driver licensing system keeps Ohio's teens, families and communities safe and strong. That's why, AAA and the Ohio GDL Coalition, urge you to accept this amendment. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,



Kimberly Schwind  
[kschwind@aaaohio.com](mailto:kschwind@aaaohio.com)  
614-431-7896