

WRITTEN TESTIMONY BEFORE THE  
HOUSE FINANCE COMMITTEE  
PROPONENT TESTIMONY ON H.B. 74

Chairman Oelslager, Vice Chair Plummer, Ranking Member Crawley, and members of the House Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide written remarks on H.B. 74, specifically dealing with provisions to strengthen Ohio's distracted driving laws.

By way of background, the Ohio Business Roundtable (OBRT) was established in 1992 for one sole purpose: to improve Ohio's business climate. Since its inception, the OBRT has worked with Ohio's governors and legislative leaders to make Ohio more business-friendly and more competitive both nationally and internationally. The Roundtable is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization comprised of chief executive officers of many of Ohio's largest, most successful companies. Because of the collective expertise and insights of OBRT members, the Roundtable is uniquely capable of bringing solutions to improve Ohio's economic vitality and ensure that Ohio remains the ideal state in which to live, work and succeed.

Our organization comes before you today to emphasize our support for a provision in H.B. 74 that would make driving while handling any electronic wireless device a primary offense for adult drivers. As you know, under current law, law enforcement is not allowed to stop an adult driver using a wireless device unless the driver commits a primary traffic offense, such as speeding or running a red light. Despite the fact that more than 100,000 distracted driving crashes have occurred in Ohio since 2013 resulting in more than 53,000 injuries, distracted driving remains a secondary offense.

Even as vehicles are getting safer, fatalities in Ohio have risen six of the past seven years. Multiple studies, as well as common sense, show that distracted driving significantly increases the risk of a fatal collision. For example, a study by the Virginia Tech Transportation Institute showed that engaging with a wireless device while driving triples the likelihood of a crash. This is quickly becoming a public health crisis. Doing nothing is not an option.

States that have taken action in passing laws to make distracted driving a primary offense have seen a reduction in traffic fatality rates. Although hands-free driving is not risk-free, it begins to break the cycle of distraction by prohibiting drivers from frequently touching electronic devices while driving. As we emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic and more cars travel on our roads and highways, it is widely expected that traffic fatalities due to distracted driving will increase. The Ohio Business Roundtable urges this committee to see the value of the “Hands Free” provisions in this bill and move forward with these provisions intact.

Chairman Oelslager and members of the Committee, thank you for allowing the Ohio Business Roundtable to provide testimony in support of the “Hands Free” provisions in H.B. 74. We respectfully ask that the Committee support these life-saving measures.

Sincerely,

Michael McLean  
Vice President of Policy  
Ohio Business Roundtable