



Testimony to the House Finance Committee

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Chairman Oelslager, Vice-Chairman Plummer, Ranking-Member Crawley, ladies and gentlemen of the Ohio House Finance Committee, thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak on behalf certain elements of HB74.

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. On behalf of Bike Cleveland and our 1,000+ members, I'd like to start by thanking the Finance Committee for including the important safety legislation to strengthen both our distracted driving laws and to improve the safety of pedestrians using crosswalks. Bike Cleveland fully support the change to prohibit the use of hand-held communication devices while driving and to make distracted driving a primary offense, often referred to as the Hand Free Ohio provisions. We also support the change to the pedestrian law to require motor vehicle drivers to stop and yield to pedestrians waiting at a crosswalk which has no traffic control signals.

Hands Free Ohio would make driving while handling any electronic wireless device a primary offense for adult drivers and will increase fines for drivers who habitually use devices while driving. In cases where a driver using a device causes serious injury or death, the penalties will mirror those of drunken driving. This 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).

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.

The pedestrian law changes included in HB74 mirror those in SB73, which was introduced last year. These changes would require the driver of a vehicle to stop and yield the right-of-way to a pedestrian waiting at the curb to enter a crosswalk when there is no traffic control signal, in addition to when the pedestrian is in the crosswalk. This means pedestrians would not have to enter the street in front of moving traffic for a vehicle to yield the pedestrians right-of-way. This change, with enforcement will make it clearer for all road users by telling motorists they need to stop for pedestrians waiting to cross the street, allowing pedestrians to establish their right-of-way without entering into harms way, and no longer burdening pedestrians with a risky decision of stepping out into moving traffic to cross the street.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this written testimony. Both of these provisions in HB74 will help in making our roadways safer for all Ohioans, especially the most vulnerable people biking and walking.