



Ohio House Finance Committee  
Proponent Testimony on HB 74  
February 18, 2020

Chairman Oelslager, Vice Chair Plummer, Ranking Member Crawley, and members of the House Finance Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on House Bill 75, specifically the provisions related to distracted driving.

My name is Michelle Holdgreve, and I am the Director of the Fix Our Roads Ohio (FOR Ohio) Coalition. FOR Ohio is a diverse coalition of Ohioans with a shared interest in the future of our state's economy and our quality of life. With more than 75 members from across the state, FOR Ohio's membership includes representatives of the transportation construction, engineering and planning industry, motorists, truckers, law enforcement and safety organizations, local governments, public transit, insurers, and state and local business groups. Formed in 2018, FOR Ohio's initial mission was to educate state leaders on the critical needs of Ohio's decaying transportation infrastructure, and to advocate for increased funding for state and local highways, roads and bridges and for an increase in state support for local transit.

The FOR Ohio Coalition now turns its attention to a pressing problem in our state that affects us all – distracted driving. Despite increased public awareness and education efforts, distracted driving continues to needlessly injure and claim the lives of thousands of Americans every year. In 2018 more than 2,800 people nationwide were killed in crashes involving a distracted driver, and another nearly 400,000 injured. According to the Ohio State Highway Patrol, more than 91,000 distracted driving crashes occurred in Ohio from 2013 through 2019, resulting in more than 47,000 injuries and deaths. The actual number of distracted driving crashes, injuries, and deaths are likely much higher because distracted driving goes largely underreported.

In 2020 travel in Ohio was down 15 percent and traffic deaths rose 7 percent compared to 2019. Ohio ended 2020 with 1,237 traffic deaths – 82 more than the 1,155 reported in 2019. This rise is directly correlated to more people now having smartphones, leading to an increase in active distraction while behind the wheel.

In addition to causing injuries and claiming lives, distracted driving is costly. Each traffic death costs Ohio about \$1.7 million and each serious injury \$157,000 in monetary losses associated with medical care, emergency services, property damage and lost productivity. These costs are incurred by the insured and uninsured across Ohio.

In line with its mission to keep Ohio road safe for all, FOR Ohio supports the specific policies in HB 74 that would modernize Ohio's texting law to a hands-free law. A review of crash statistics shows that states with hands-free laws with primary enforcement, as proposed in HB 74, have seen reductions in traffic deaths, many within the two years after passing and enforcing new laws.

We encourage you to support efforts to make Ohio's roads safer by strengthening Ohio's distracted driving law. Doing so will save lives. Thank you again for the opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of the FOR Ohio Coalition.