



February 16, 2021

The Honorable Scott Oelslager
Ohio House of Representatives
77 S. High St., 13th Floor
Columbus, OH 43215

Re: HB 74 (Oelslager, S.) Transportation Budget

Chairman Oelslager:

On behalf of State Auto Insurance Companies, please support passage of HB 74. Through your support of the Hands-Free Ohio provision therein and by making the use of a handheld electronic device while driving a primary offense, we can save lives on Ohio's roadways.

State Auto Insurance Companies is an Ohio-domiciled Property & Casualty insurance carrier with annual premiums surpassing \$2 billion. Since 1921, we have written personal automobile insurance for many thousands of Ohioans and have a long history of advocating for meaningful improvements to road safety. As an insurance carrier we see firsthand the positive impacts road safety measurers can have and, sadly, we also see when improvements need to be made. It's that experience that leads us to strongly support the Hands-Free Ohio reforms contained in HB 74.

Studies show that distracted driving is responsible for 400,000 crashes each year across the United States. In 2017, Ohio recorded about 14,000 distracted driving crashes in which 58 people were killed, 493 were seriously injured and almost 4,700 injured statewide. However, distracted driving is vastly underreported because it's difficult to prove unless the officer sees it, or the driver admits to it.

Mr. Chairman, it doesn't have to be this way. Distracted driving is a choice made by one driver that can tragically impact the lives of other drivers on the roadway. Consequently, each of the deaths and injuries mentioned above are entirely preventable if drivers choose to focus on the task at hand. The Hands-Free Ohio provisions in HB 74 will give law enforcement the tools they need to combat this dangerous activity, and penalties will serve as a deterrent to would-be offenders. In fact, 13 states that have enacted hands-free laws have seen an average of 13% decrease in traffic fatality rates within two years of passage and enforcement.

Again, please vote Yes on HB 74 and on creating a Hands-Free Ohio.

Sincerely,

Mark Schloemer

Mark Schloemer
External Relations Director
State Auto Insurance Companies

cc: Ohio House of Representatives Finance Committee