

February 23, 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

Good Morning Chairman Oelslager, Vice Chair Plummer and Ranking Member Crawley,

My name is John Gordon and I am a retired law enforcement officer with 42 years of experience. I spent eight years in the USAF, three and a half of which was providing security aboard Air Force One and Special Air Missions aircraft worldwide. I also served with the Allen County Sheriff's Office, the Marion Police Department, the Shelby Police Department, and the Marion County Common Pleas Court. My wife and I had one child whom we nicknamed "Rusty," and he was also a law enforcement officer.

One of my hardest calls for service ever experienced was making death notifications to family members about the loss of a loved one regardless of the circumstances. More often than not, the notification was due to a traffic crash.

I never expected that my family would receive this type of notification but in the late night hours of May 18, 2008 there was a knock on my door. I found a young deputy from the department I where held my commission giving me the same news that I had delivered hundreds of times. My only child had been killed in a traffic crash. The investigation ultimately determined that the other driver had been texting just seconds prior to this fatal crash. But in 2008, "Texting and Driving" was not against the law, although it had been discussed in the halls of this historic building. It took another four year to pass a watered down law.

The unique circumstances surrounding this crash is that I instructed at the Marion Ohio Basic Police Academy, and I taught my son how to become a police officer. The young man that killed son also graduated from this same academy and I instructed him too. He received 20 days in jail for killing our only child and denying his family of a husband and father.

Since learning about the dangers of distracted driving, I have received training at the U.S Department of Transportation and the National Safety Council. I created a safety program called "Rusty's Story" and have talked to over 34,000 people in four states.

You have the opportunity today to do the right thing and pass a law banning texting while driving and making it a primary offense. Do not handcuff law enforcement from the

opportunity of saving lives. Give them the tools they need. In closing, how many lives can you save with your passing vote?

Thank you for your consideration to vote YES on HB 74 and Hands-Free Ohio. This legislation will save lives by keeping all eyes on the road and both hands on the wheel.

John P. T. Gordon

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President, Rusty's Story