

Proponent Testimony: Ohio House Bill 293

Chairman Green and Members of the Transportation and Public Safety Committee,

My name is Brock Dietrich and I am here to encourage you to support strengthening Ohio's GDL provisions to protect teen drivers.

As a parent teaching my teenager to drive, the GDL provisions were the guidepost by which I ensured that my daughter was prepared to handle driving independently. I assumed that the GDL provisions were crafted through careful research to determine the right amount of practice necessary, and the correct restrictions to safely guide my child onto independent driving.

It was just over 4 years ago when I was met with the stark realization that GDL did not adequately prepare my daughter for driving. That day was October 20th, 2013, when my daughter Sydnee was killed in a single car crash.

While I take personal responsibility for Sydnee not being prepared for independent driving, the GDL provisions as currently written do not set appropriate expectations for teens and parents on the amount of practice necessary for teens to drive independently.

Since Sydnee's death, I have vowed to honor her memory by educating teens and parents on what it takes to learn to drive safely. I do this through sharing Sydnee's story in school assemblies in partnership with Impact Teen Drivers. Unfortunately, our educational outreach efforts cannot reach all of Ohio's teens and parents.

The reality is that parents, like myself, interpret the GDL provisions to be the safe driving guidepost. But knowing this reality, you have the opportunity to reach further than our educational efforts ever could, simply by casting a vote in favor of this bill.

There is only one way for teens to learn how to drive, and that's to practice on the road. The extensive examination of experts such as Dr. Robert Foss has shown that an extended learner permit period and driving restrictions between the hours of 9pm and midnight will have a substantial, positive impact on teen crash deaths.

6 months of supervised driving time is not enough for teens to experience a variety of road hazards and conditions under their parent's protective guidance. Extending the learners permit phase of GDL from 6 months to 1 year will give teens more supervised experience and restricting driving between 9pm and midnight will eliminate the most risky hours for new teen drivers.

Car crashes are the number one killer of teens, and this committee has the opportunity to save other parents like myself from suffering the loss of a child.

Please honor Sydnee's memory by casting a vote in favor of this bill to help Ohio teens.