

**BEFORE THE OHIO HOUSE TRANSPORTATION AND PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE**

**PROPONENT TESTIMONY ON HOUSE BILL106**

**MARCH 26, 2019**

Chairman Green, Vice Chair McClain, Ranking Member Sheehy, and members of the Ohio House Transportation and Public Safety Committee; I am Kimberly Schwind, Senior Manager, Public Affairs at AAA Ohio Auto Club and am here today representing the Ohio Conference of AAA Clubs. The Ohio Conference is composed of the six AAA Clubs in Ohio, and represents approximately 3 million Ohioans, all constituents of yours.

AAA fully supports House Bill 106, which proposes to modernize Ohio’s young driver licensing system with two simple, but important adjustments

* Lengthen the temporary instruction permit from six to 12 months and
* ensure newly licensed teen drivers are supervised while driving after 10 p.m., rather than midnight, for the first six months of licensure, with exemptions for work, school and religious activities.

The truth is, we have a big problem. Motor vehicle crashes remain the number one killer of teenagers. This epidemic is killing our children and tearing our families apart. Here are some facts:

* Young drivers are consistently overrepresented in motor vehicle crashes – New teen drivers ages 16-17, are three times as likely as adults to be involved in a deadly crash (AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety).
* Nearly 38,000 injuries and fatalities occurred in Ohio teen driver crashes during the past five years. That’s an average of 20 injuries and fatalities every day (Ohio Department of Transportation crash data).
* Ohio is now 7th in the country for the highest number of teen fatality and injury crashes (Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety).
* This doesn’t just impact the teen drivers. It puts ALL road users in danger. Two-thirds of those killed or injured in crashes involving teen drivers are people other than the teen driver (AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety)!

A modern young driver licensing system is a proven strategy for reducing teen crashes, making travel safer for young drivers and everyone who shares the roads with them. Unfortunately, Ohio’s system for licensing young drivers hasn’t kept up with the latest research on teen driver crashes and how to prevent them. Consequently, we continue to see too many Ohioans dying in teen driver crashes on our roads! We believe this is unacceptable; especially when we have the solution to save lives right in front of us.

Please keep in mind that this bill is NOT about age or maturity; it is about valuable, behind-the-wheel experience. Currently Ohio teens are not gaining the experience they need with an adult to become safe drivers.

A 12-month permit phase ensures every new driver has the chance to practice driving with an adult in all four seasons. Having a well-rounded driving experience in all types of weather is invaluable. Parents of teen drivers in states that have a 12-month permit are extremely supportive. After North Carolina enacted a 12-month learner’s permit, 95 percent of parents said it was just right or not long enough.

Nighttime driving protections for newly licensed young drivers protect them from the most dangerous driving conditions while they are still inexperienced and adjusting to driving without adult supervision. Under Ohio’s current system safeguards for teen drivers begin too late to do that. 75% of Ohio's young driver nighttime crashes occur before midnight.

Beginning nighttime driving protections at 10 p.m. for the first six months after licensure helps ensure newly licensed drivers are not exposed to this high-risk time before they develop the skills needed to cope with the dangers of driving at night. It is important to reiterate that this 10 p.m. protection is NOT a curfew and current law exemptions remain in place if you have work, school or religious activities.

Numerous reputable studies have proven that longer learners permit periods and supervised nighttime driving protections set at 10 p.m. result in large fatal crash reductions for 16-and 17-year-old drivers. Data from other states also proves that these provisions do save lives:

* In North Carolina the initial effects of a similar young driver’s license system as the one House Bill 106 proposes saw a 57 percent reduction in 16-year-old fatal crashes within the first two years.
* Crash data of the five years after Kansas enacted a 9 p.m. nighttime driving protection shows a dramatic decrease in the number of crashes, injuries and fatalities between 9 p.m. and midnight. The largest decrease was a 71 percent decrease in fatalities during the 11 p.m. hour.

We have to remember that this is about saving lives. It’s not about convenience. Ask any parent that has lost a child in a car crash and they would tell you that an additional six months is *nothing* compared to a lifetime without their son or daughter.

As a parent myself, I believe that we intrinsically want to protect our children. We are scared to death to let our children out on the road alone; especially when we know the facts.

H.B. 106 has broad support. Supporters include AAA, Akron Children’s Hospital, American Academy of Pediatrics, American Property Casualty Insurance Association, Better Ohio Teen Drivers Inc., DRVN, Nationwide Children’s Hospital, Nationwide Insurance, National Safety Council, Ohio Association of Chiefs of Police Ohio Health, Ohio PTA, Safe Kids Ohio, State Auto Insurance, State Farm Insurance and other safety advocates.

Modernizing Ohio's young driver licensing system with the two adjustments proposed in HB 106 will provide teens with greater protection, give their parents more peace of mind, and make the roads safer for everyone. A modern young driver licensing system keeps Ohio's teens, families and communities safe and strong. That’s why, AAA and the Ohio GDL Coalition, urge you to pass HB 106. Thank you for your time today. I’m happy to answer any questions.