**Ohio House Transportation and Public Safety Committee**

**April 30, 2019**

**HB 106 Proponent Testimony**

**Mike Belcuore**

Good morning Chairman Green, Vice Chair McClain, Ranking Member Sheehy and members of the committee. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak with you today. My name is Mike Belcuore. I am the Market Manager for AAA Driving School in the Cincinnati and Miami Valley areas.

To give you a little background I have been the Market Manager of our Driving School for a little over 6 years. Prior to that I was the Airport Manager for National Car Rental and Alamo Rent a Car at the Dayton Airport. So I have been around cars and driving almost my whole career. I am also the parent of a 16 year old that just received his license in March. So to say that teen driving safety is important to me is an understatement.

People ask me why I support House Bill 106. Quite simply for me, it is because car crashes are one of the leading causes of death for teens in the U.S. We lose too many of our young drivers in Ohio and across the country to this issue and I quite frankly think something needs to be done. I feel this is what House Bill 106 is trying to accomplish and it is doing so by tackling the one thing that can help fix the problem, EXPERIENCE.

What is that old saying? Practice makes perfect. That could not be any truer than it is with driving. A new driver NEEDS experience to become better aware of the risks that are out there and how to deal with them in a safe manner. But yet, with the way the law is now, a teen driver can hold their temps for 6 months, drive 50 hours with their parents, get the theory behind driving and 8 hours of on the road instruction from a driving school, and then go get their license and then be expected to safely navigate the roads in ALL conditions safely. This to me is an issue.

We do not expect an athlete to be a varsity starter in just 6 months of practice, nor do we expect a pianist to begin playing Mozart in such little time. But yet when it comes to something that can kill, its 6 months, here are the keys and go do your best.

House Bill 106 tries to combat this. By giving the student a full year with their temps they now have a chance to experience more on the road ways. They have a chance to experience all the seasons, all weather conditions. It allows parents more time to get out on the roads with the students to give them the experience they need. Now, one could argue that parents have 50 hours and 6 months to do that now. Yes, I agree. But if a teen gets their temps in April and their license in October, is that teen going to have an opportunity to drive in the snow and ice with an experienced driver in the car? Probably not. Do we want a young driver’s first experience in these conditions to be alone in the car possibly a couple months after getting their license? I know I do not.

The Night Time protection in House Bill 106 tries to do this as well. Again notice I said protection not restriction or curfew. It does not say they cannot drive, or be out, at night, it just needs to be supervised driving. In fact I ENCOURAGE parents to get out with their teens and drive in the dark. Again, you can argue that a teen has to do 10 hours at night before they get their license. Is this enough time to be a Pro? In fact, if you look at that same teen I mentioned above that got their temps in April and license in October, they probably had a hard time getting their 10 hours of night driving in because of daylight saving time. Getting dark at 9pm does not make it easy for all teens to get the required hours. So why not give them the year for them to get this done and give them more experience by requiring them to drive supervised after 10pm.

Now. Some will say, it’s the Driver Training that needs to be changed. I do not think this is true. One I think the Driver Training Curriculum and requirements in Ohio are good. We in the profession provide good theory and base training for the Teens in Ohio. This bill allows parents the time to provide good practical practice and experience to build on the foundation that Driver Training provides. Also, the process to become a new driver is expensive enough. Between the price of Driver’s Ed, Insurance, more fuel and even in some cases another car, adding a teen driver to a household is a costly endeavor and in some cases hard to afford. If the Driver Education requirements are increased that is going to lead to higher costs to parents and teens. Why force families to pay more for the practical training that parents can already provide at a fraction of the cost? This bill gives the parents the time to provide the experience to their teen, making them better equipped to handle the risks of the road.

In closing, let me tell you why I support this bill and why you should as well. For the past six years, the first thing I have done in the mornings is look at the various local news sources to see if there were any teen crashes the day before. If there are, I look to see if one of MY kids were involved. I say MY kids because I truly feel that any child that goes through my Driving School is one of my kids. On June 14th, 2017 my fear came true. On that morning, I found out that on the day before, June 13th, one of MY students was involved in a fatal crash. The student was driving at 10:30pm up a dark winding road, lost control and crashed. While his passenger was pulled from the car and survived - he did not. This is a child that finished Driving School on May 30th, got his license a few days after and was dead on June 13th. Can I say this student would still be alive today if House Bill 106 had been effect? Not with absolute certainty but I do know he wouldn’t have had his license yet and he wouldn’t have been driving unsupervised at 10:30pm. So I think there is realistic chance this young life could have been saved. To me if House Bill 106 saves at least 1 life then it is worth it. Let’s not let hindsight be 20-20.

Thank you for allowing me the time to speak to you today. I’m happy to answer any questions.