



WRITTEN TESTIMONY BEFORE THE OHIO SENATE LOCAL GOVERNMENT, PUBLIC
SAFETY AND VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

PROPONENT TESTIMONY
SB 285

Chair Manning, Vice Chair Brenner, Ranking Member Maharath and members of the Senate Local Government, Public Safety and Veterans Affairs Committee, thank you for the opportunity to write in support of SB 285, which would strengthen the penalties for distracted driving.

SB 285 would prohibit drivers from having physical contact with their phones or any other wireless devices while they are either driving or stopped in a lane of traffic. It also allows primary enforcement for violations.

This update to Ohio law is much needed. Fatalities from car crashes in Ohio have risen five out of the past six years, despite the fact that vehicles are increasingly become safer. This can most likely be explained by the rising use of smart phones while driving, whether it's texting, emailing, surfing the internet or watching a video. A study by the Virginia Tech Transportation Institute found that dialing, texting or simply reaching for a phone while driving triples the risk of a crash.

Establishing a primary, "hands free" law in Ohio can reduce crash fatalities. 14 states have enacted such laws before 2018; 11 of those states saw a reduction in traffic fatalities within two years of the passage and enforcement of those laws. SB 285 is intended to aid in changing driver behavior to prevent crashes and save lives.

SB 285 also gives law enforcement clarity for enforcement by establishing "hands free" as a primary law.

We appreciate Sen. Kunze and Sen. O'Brien for introducing this bill to help make Ohio roads safer. Thank you for your time, and we urge your support of this legislation.

Respectfully,

Kent Scarrett
Executive Director
Ohio Municipal League