



**Doug Scoles
State Executive Director
Mothers Against Drunk Driving
Testimony Supporting House Bill 37
Criminal Justice Committee
March 21, 2023**

Thank you Madam Chair and members of the committee for allowing MADD the opportunity to submit testimony in support of House Bill 37, which enhances and stiffens penalties for drunk driving that causes the death of another. My name is Doug Scoles, State Executive Director of Mothers Against Drunk Driving.

Drunk and impaired driving is still a deadly crime and has not gone away. In fact **the problem of drunk driving increased 23 percent in Ohio from 2019 to 2020**, and the trend has not decreased or improved since then. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) in 2020 in Ohio, 448 people were killed in drunk driving crashes – an increase from 362 people the year before. I've been with MADD for 20 years since 2003, and during that tenure, I have never seen the number of drunk driving fatalities in Ohio as high as this.

Previous legislation and current language contained in the Ohio Revised Code, have had little impact on the trend of drunk driving behavior in Ohio. The fatality rate from drunk driving and drunk and impaired driving behavior overall has gotten worse over the past two years. Since the time that COVID became prevalent in Ohio, impaired driving behavior has taken major steps backwards, and still trending this way. This trend must stop. This dangerous behavior has, can and will take more lives on our roads. Impaired driving was once-upon-a-time known commonly as a "late night" crime – pertaining in large part to someone who may have had too much to drink from a night out. That is no longer the case nor has it been for awhile. Impaired driving is occurring at all times of the day and night. It has not gotten better, and if this trend is not reversed, it will take more lives on our roads. Please understand that the lives that I'm referring to can be "anyone". They

can be anyone's loved one. It's time – in fact, well overdue as in the case of the Wright family, that we take a much more serious stand on this crime.

MADD believes that HB 37 will put more teeth in Ohio's impaired driving law and will make people think twice before getting behind the wheel impaired. Two key provisions to HB 37 are that it will increase fines up to \$25,000 for aggravated vehicular homicide, and it will increase mandatory prison terms for this crime. Certainly, these provisions can't bring back a loved one. But they are reasonably and appropriately suitable for this crime that is 100% preventable. And in today's world – with all of the options that we have available to us in order to get from point A to B other than trying to drive while impaired, this crime is a level that is "intolerable", and is more unacceptable now than it ever has been before.

MADD urges the committee to advance HB 37 in the legislative process.

Thank you.