



LEAGUE OF MICHIGAN BICYCLISTS

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Testimony presented to House Transportation Committee

We urge your support for hands-free driving legislation that is strong, enforceable, and broad in scope. The continued increase in distracted driving crashes shows a need for stronger laws than the current texting while driving ban. To give a few brief examples:

- In 2015, five-year-old Henry Callender was struck from behind by a distracted driver in an SUV while riding his bike to the park. Thanks to his helmet and to the trained first responder who witnessed the crash, he survived... but Henry needed multiple surgeries and suffered permanent damage.
- In 2014, 35-year-old Jill Byelich, a Michigan State Police employee and DeWitt resident, was riding her bicycle on West Howe Road and wearing a reflective vest and helmet. She was struck by a distracted driver and killed. You may see her face on billboards in the Lansing area.
- Just last Wednesday afternoon, Dan Horal of Brighton Township was riding at Island Lake Recreation Area when a driver turned left into his path. Dan was fatally injured in the crash and died on Friday. We don't know why the driver failed to see him – and this is true of many similar crashes. When a driver says after a crash that they didn't see the cyclist, we have no way to tell if they were looking at the screen of a phone instead.

To address this crisis, we need a law that is broad enough to capture current and future technology, includes an easy mechanism to trigger enforcement, and has enough teeth to act as a deterrent.

We support aspects of House Bills 4181, 4198 and 4199. We appreciate the ease of police enforcement for HB 4181 and the strong penalties in HB 4199, and hope to see a future bill package that combines these strengths. We also support aspects of Senate Bill 288, introduced by Sen. Ruth Johnson.

According to data gathered by Michigan State Police, there were 12,788 distracted driving crashes in Michigan in 2016. 43 people were killed in those crashes. In 2017, those numbers increased sharply: 20,115 distracted driving crashes, with 72 people killed in those crashes. Preliminary numbers for 2018 indicate 75 people killed. Each crash caused by cellphone use represents an avoidable loss of time, resources, and potentially life.

Michigan would not be acting alone in establishing a hands-free driving law. 18 other states have banned use of hand-held wireless devices while driving, and the effects have been strongly positive. In the first month after enactment of the ban, Georgia saw a decrease of 48% in cellphone-related crashes.

I call on you to pass a strengthened hands-free driving law that is easy to enforce, hard to ignore, and effective in making our roadways safer for people who bike, walk, and use wheelchairs. Thank you for your leadership on this important public safety matter.

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More info, including sources for all statistics cited, available at <http://lmb.org/distracted>