

Written Testimony
February 18, 2014
H.501

To Chairman Lippert, members of the House Committee on Judiciary:

I'm writing to express my support for your efforts to establish a common standard of driver impairment to facilitate enforcement of impaired driving laws. I realize this is a complex issue. I feel the issue here is not the source of the impairment, but the degree of impairment, and the need to keep all drivers who do not have the cognitive and motor skills necessary to drive safely off the road. I believe anyone who cannot pass a field sobriety test should be considered an impaired driver, and that laws currently in place to deal with alcohol should be applied to all cases where drivers cannot pass this test. If evidence exists as to the source of the impairment, action can be taken under specific statutes. But the fact is, anyone who cannot pass a field sobriety test shouldn't be driving, and the officer should have the authority under law to remove them from the road immediately.

I'm particularly concerned with the tragic effects impaired drivers have had on vulnerable roadway users in Vermont. Fifteen percent of our highway fatalities in 2012 were pedestrians, and cyclists have suffered as well, a vast over-representation of this group in our highway fatalities and injuries. The first reason people give for not cycling is fear of being hit by a car. Impairment and distracted driving are involved in a chronically high proportion of highway fatalities - over a third of all highway deaths. It seems to me there is no better place to concentrate our efforts in reducing highway injuries and death than in reducing impaired driving, and I support your efforts to address this problem.

Bruce Lierman