



**House Committee on Judiciary
H. 560 - An act relating to traffic safety
January 21, 2016**

Chairwoman Grad, and distinguished members of the House Committee on Judiciary. My name is Dan Goodman and I am the manager of public affairs for New Hampshire and Vermont for AAA Northern New England. I am here on behalf of our organization, which serves more than 148,000 members in the state of Vermont.

AAA actively advocates for public policy that makes Vermont a safer place to live, work, and raise our families. I have outlined five traffic safety recommendations for this committee.

Night driving is one of the most challenging driving conditions for a new young driver to be on the road. Inexperience, reduced visibility, and an increased likelihood of being in a car with other teenage passengers greatly increases the risk of a crash. AAA has found that nighttime and passenger restrictions lower death and crash rates for young drivers. Teenage motor vehicle crash deaths in 2011 occurred most frequently from 9 p.m. to midnight (16 percent) and midnight to 3 a.m. (16 percent). States with nighttime driving restrictions show crash reductions of up to 60 percent during restricted hours.

Vermont is the only state in the country that does not currently have a night time restriction as part of their GDL system. It is our first recommendation that Vermont enact a nighttime driving restriction from 10pm to 5am for at least the first six months for intermediate license holders. The evidence is clear. If we want to save teen lives, restrict the hours they can drive to before 10PM. Keep in mind this is NOT a curfew. It is a restriction. They can still drive if accompanied by a parent or guardian.

The second recommendation is to upgrade the teen passenger restriction from a secondary law to a primary law. Recent AAA Foundation research found that risk of death in a crash for 16-and 17-year-old drivers' increases with each passenger in the car. Compared to driving with no passengers, a 16- or 17-year-old driver's risk of death per mile driven:

- Increases 44% when carrying one passenger younger than 21 (and no older passengers)
- Doubles when carrying two passengers younger than 21 (and no older passengers)
- Quadruples when carrying three or more passengers younger than 21 (and no older passengers)
- Decreases 62% when a passenger aged 35 or older is in the vehicle

Most recently the AAA Foundation has completed groundbreaking new research into the factors affecting teen crashes. They looked at 1,700 crash videos of teen drivers and found that passengers were present in 36% of all crashes, 84% of passengers were estimated to be ages 16-19, and fewer than 5% were with parents or other adults



Placing restrictions on driving is neither a punishment nor an indictment of today's teens. We want to reinforce to all teenage drivers that driving in the state of Vermont is a privilege not a right. The learning to drive process is a system that requires educational requirements, enforcement and proven graduated licensing laws. We have a responsibility to protect our young people from crashes, injuries and death. Conditions of the road have changed; we now live in a faster paced world with, more vehicles, more congestion and more distractions. AAA believes that one of the best ways we can accomplish this, is by strengthening the GDL program and having a gold standard program that Vermont can be satisfied with.

AAA, policy makers, health care professionals and the general public have long been concerned about the effects that aging has on the ability to operate a motor vehicle safely. Physicians and other health professionals are at the forefront for identifying individuals of any age with medical conditions that affect their ability to safely operate a motor vehicle.

Our third recommendation is that Vermont require motorists to have in-person renewal at least every 5 years for all drivers starting no later than age 75. Currently Vermont drivers renew their license in-person every 8 years. Research suggests that the single most effective policy state DMVs can enact to improve safety for older drivers is to require in-person license renewal. A 2004 study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association found that drivers ages 85 and older living in states requiring in-person renewal were 17% less likely to die in a motor vehicle crash, compared to drivers ages 85 and older in states not requiring in-person renewal. In a second study, in-person license renewal was found to be associated with fewer crash fatalities among drivers ages 65 and older.

Requiring drivers to renew their license in person allows for a range of other activities to occur at the same time: vision testing; self-reporting of medical conditions (e.g., by filling out a brief form); observation by the license examiner (e.g., for potential indications of cognitive or physical impairment); written and, in some states, road signs testing; and even being asked to take a road test. These expanded possibilities likely contribute to the overall effectiveness of in-person license renewal as a tool for identifying potential at-risk drivers.

Our fourth recommendation is require visual acuity testing at the same time as in-person renewals. Vision testing at license renewal will identify declining sharpness of sight which may mean glasses or contacts are required, or it may indicate that an eye condition needs further evaluation by a healthcare provider. Undergoing vision screening upon in-person renewal (or having to submit the results of a recent vision test performed by an optometrist) helps to ensure that drivers meet some minimum level of vision.

Each year, roughly 10,000 people are killed in alcohol-related crashes, representing approximately one-third of all motor vehicle deaths. Beyond the fatalities, the prevalence of impaired driving is reflected in the fact that 1.4 million people were arrested for driving under the influence of alcohol in 2013. This is equivalent to more than two arrests every minute. Impaired driving affects all road users, and more



than 8 out of ten AAA members identify impaired driving as one of their top safety concerns. Additionally, a 2012 AAA poll measuring the traffic safety culture of Americans, found that 8 out of ten respondents support ignition interlocks for all convicted offenders. The crashes, fatalities and economic burden associated with impaired driving are preventable.

AAA is calling on states to curb these preventable deaths by requiring ignition interlock devices for all convicted offenders, including those convicted for the first time, repeat offenders and those convicted of driving with a suspended license while impaired. Strong ignition interlocks laws can reduce alcohol-impaired driving crashes and save lives

What do we know about impaired drivers?

- Motor vehicle crashes result in 1 fatality every 16 minutes.
- In 2013, there were 10,076 fatalities in crashes involving a driver with a BAC of .08 or higher
- 1 person dies every 51 minutes in an alcohol impaired crash.
- In 2011, Vermont's breath test refusal rate was 14% (in comparison Maine's refusal rate was 5% and NH was 72%).
- About one-third of all drivers arrested or convicted of driving while intoxicated or driving under the influence of alcohol are repeat offenders.
- Impaired driving crashes have an economic impact in excess of \$100 billion annually nationwide. (people other than the impaired driver paid 63% of the cost of these crashes).

What do we know about ignition interlocks?

- Ignition interlocks prevent an impaired driver from starting a vehicle, effectively preventing them from driving while impaired.
- Currently, 25 states require interlocks for all offenders.
- All states have some provision for ignition interlock use, but fall short in requiring IIDs for all convicted offenders.
- Interlocks reduce repeat offenses by a median of 67 percent. In comparison, estimates suggest that 50-75% of individuals who receive license suspensions as their DUI sanction continue to drive their vehicle.
- Drivers with IIDs have fewer alcohol-impaired driving crashes than drivers who had their drivers' licenses suspended because of a DUI conviction.

Thank you for your time and attention to this very important topic. We must continue to explore traffic safety policies and that effectively balance safety and mobility for all drivers.