

Testifying at Senate Transportation Committee

Friday, February 16, 2024

Thank you, Chairperson Mazza and committee members of the Senate Transportation Committee, for allowing me to testify on S 210 concerning Mandating Driver Education training for operators 18 years of age and older.

Our data shows that the leading causes of violations, crashes, injuries, and deaths are connected to the 18–24-year-old age group. Many of these individuals decided not to take a Driver Education course in either their public school or a private commercial Driver Education school because it was not required of them to be able to receive a Driver's License.

S 210 states “An operator's license may be issued to applicants who are 18 years of age or older and have passed the driver examination required and a certified driver education and training course approved by the Commissioner of Motor Vehicles that includes at least 30 hours of classroom instruction and at least six hours of behind-the-wheel instruction. The Commissioner of Motor Vehicles will approve the curriculum that will be used which should be developed by a committee of Driver and Traffic Safety individuals and individuals from AOE and DMV.

As of now many of our 18–24-year-olds took some lessons from friends or family members to learn what is on the road exam and were able to pass that road test. They did not do any classroom or behind-the wheel training in which they would have learned such things as: traffic signs, signals and roadway markings, traffic laws, managing risks, the zone control system, vehicle equipment, vehicle control, natural laws and traction, skid control, steering techniques, impairment including the problem driving under the use of some prescription drugs, insurance, driving green, adverse conditions, vision and perception and vehicle maintenance.

They would have learned from a certified Driver Education teacher either at private or public schools or with our commercial Driver Education schools.

S210 will help solve the issue of reducing the collision, injury, and fatality rate of the 18–24-year-olds. I think it is admirable that this bill will also have higher age groups required to take Driver Education. However, if we are teaching 50–64-year-olds or elders 65 and older the curriculum and classroom and behind-the-wheel requirements should be different. They need much more education in Vehicle Technology than the younger drivers for whom technology is not as challenging. Again committee from the Driver Education community along with individuals from AOE and DMV can help develop such a curriculum.

A question may be where these classes will take place and what happens if individuals cannot afford such a class. I propose that the classes be done at schools, commercial schools or through the Community College of Vermont which are in every region. It is also my hope that VSAC will continue to assist students in getting VSAC loans which they already assist students with.

We have teachers available to help with these classes and we have individuals wanting to receive certification to teach Driver and Traffic Safety. However, we need to address the availability of where the Driver Education Certification classes are being held. We need to make sure that the training of Driver Education Instructors is at the level of what the National Driver Education Standards are. The passing of this bill will be a step in the right direction to reduce violations, collisions, injuries, and deaths in our Vermont roadways.

Thank you.

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