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Members of the Vermont Senate Education Committee

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Vermont State House Montpelier, Vermont

IN RE: Senate Bill S. 259 (Introduced- Sen. Wendy Harrison)

OPPOSED

Dear Senators,

Introduction

Let me share two quotes with you that are underlie the issue at hand:

We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit" Aristotle

 "I want to get as much as I can, for as little as possible" 1974 by a high school student working for my father, who will remain unnamed.

The question these quotes raise is what serves the needs of our State better?

Then there is the question of accessibility which is currently limited by trained and certified Driver education **teachers** in our public schools. Recognizing the need to have to have teachers that can meet the learning needs of diversified learners; across multicultural settings with driver education exists to establish safe driving habits at the earliest stage of licensure. The Novice Teen Driver Education and Training Administrative Standards reflect this principle by emphasizing instructional quality, behavioral development, and verified readiness, not mere course completion.

My testament will explain why asynchronous online driver education, while efficient and convenient, fails to meet the Education and Training expectations embedded throughout NTDETAS and therefore is only a band-aid approach to the real issue of staffing.

This written submission addresses the alignment between asynchronous online driver education and the Novice Teen Driver Education and Training Administrative Standards (NTDETAS). The central finding is clear:

Asynchronous online driver education only aligns with curriculum standards found in two attachments (A and B) of the Education and Training requirements of NTDETAS. As the S.259 is written it only addresses some of the Standards for online instruction found in Subsection 2.6 of the NTDETAS

The standards were designed to ensure novice drivers develop the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors necessary for safe driving through structured, instructor-led, interactive, and integrated instruction. Asynchronous instruction—by design—removes critical elements required by these standards, including real-time instructor engagement, competency-based verification, and concurrent integration with behind-the-wheel training.

Purpose and Intent of NTDETAS

NTDETAS were developed to promote consistent, high-quality driver education programs that measurably improve safety outcomes for novice teen drivers.

Across the Education and Training domain, the standards emphasize:

- Qualified instructor involvement

- Interactive learning experiences

- Phased and scaffolded instruction

- Competency-based assessment

- Development of safe driving attitudes and behaviors

- Concurrent and integrated classroom and behind-the-wheel instruction

The standards consistently frame driver education as a training process, not a content delivery system.

Misalignment of Asynchronous Online Instruction with NTDETAS

I am submitting an analysis of where asynchronous online training does not meet the majority of the NTDETAS standards. For the sake time I will attempt to touch upon
1. Lack of Real-Time Instructor Engagement
NTDETAS repeatedly reference instruction delivered and guided by qualified instructors who actively monitor learning, provide feedback, and intervene when students misunderstand safety-critical concepts.
Asynchronous online instruction eliminates real-time instructor interaction, preventing observation, correction, and verification of learning.
A system that cannot observe learning cannot reliably certify readiness for licensure.
For example I was recently called upon to substitute in for our full-time driver education teacher. The lesson was a critical lesson about about being able to control a car. I used the Socratic Method asking questions and modeling sample answers. I followed with a slideshow that introduced vocabulary and showed the concepts of Reference Points and Precision Turns. I then showed a video where I used a GoPro on my head to demonstrate what those concepts look like in the car. The next was to use model roadways and toy cars of the same ratio to walk through those concepts utilizing the video and checking for correct understanding. I then asked for questions: one student asked a very basic but important question: "What is a corner post?" I was able to freeze frame the video and show the post between the windshield and the driver's side window.
Without that key piece of information that student would not have understood the concept.

Absence of Competency-Based Progression

The standards emphasize demonstrated understanding and skill acquisition rather than passive participation.

Asynchronous programs typically advance students based on:

- Time spent in modules

- Completion of content

- Automated quizzes

These mechanisms measure exposure, not judgment, risk assessment, or decision-making ability, core competencies required by NTDETAS.

Failure to Allow Concurrent and Integrated Learning

A critical expectation of NTDETAS is coordination between classroom instruction and behind-the-wheel training, allowing students to immediately apply classroom concepts in supervised driving environments.

Asynchronous instruction does not allow for:

- Timing coordination with behind-the-wheel lessons

- Instructor alignment between classroom and vehicle concepts

- Reinforcement of concepts through guided practice

For example I have brought my driver routes which are my Behind-the Wheel lesson plans. On the committee meeting 2/10, it was commented that the driving with young adults is stressful; my reply was not when you have done adequate preparation. Here are the lessons for the driving and they align with the concepts taught in the class first.

Inability to Develop Safe Driving Attitudes and Behaviors

NTDETAS explicitly include the development of safe driving attitudes and behaviors, not just technical knowledge.

These dispositions are cultivated through:

- Instructor modeling

- Guided discussion

- Corrective feedback

- Observation of student reasoning

Asynchronous instruction cannot replicate these elements and therefore cannot reliably shape the behavioral outcomes the standards require. I relate this to my years of teaching Hunter Firearm Safety at the Green Mountain Conservation Camp in Woodbury. We as counselors would sit and discuss campers attitudes and behaviors and if we saw evidence that they did not show a lack of respect or negative behaviors, we did not certify them and talked to their parents.

NTDETAS Language and Alignment Summary

The following summarizes key NTDETAS expectations and the corresponding gaps in asynchronous online instruction:

- Instructor-led instruction: No real-time instructor presence

- Interactive learning experiences: Predominantly passive content delivery

- Competency verification: Advancement based on completion rather than demonstrated readiness

- Phased instruction: Self-paced, non-scaffolded progression

- Concurrent classroom and behind-the-wheel instruction: No mechanism for integration

- Behavioral development: No observation or modeling of safety attitudes

Collectively, these gaps demonstrate a fundamental misalignment with the Education and Training intent of NTDETAS.

Policy Considerations

If a state adopts or references NTDETAS as the foundation for novice driver education, policy should ensure instructional formats preserve the standards' core requirements.

Policy options include:

- To develop an in state teacher training program through the Community College of Vermont that would lead to a national certification

- Engage with the American Driver Traffic Safety Education Association (ADTSEA) to assist with the development and alignment to the NTDETAS standards for Teacher Training Specifically Sections 2.0 and 3.0 of the Standards

- Coordinate with the Community College of Vermont and explore if ADTSEA's current teacher training program will meet their requirements

- Leading to a teacher preparation program that CCV and ADTSEA could develop and administrate

- To apply for grants through the Vermont State Highway Office

- To develop a corps of cadre of "Trainer of Trainers"

- Develop incentives for schools and teachers to recruit new driver education teachers

Conclusion

Driver education is a public safety system. Its effectiveness depends on instruction that builds habits, judgment, and responsibility, not simply credentials. Though asynchronous online driver education is an important tool to quality education. As a stand alone method of deliver it does not align with the Education and Training requirements of the Novice Teen Driver Education and Training Administrative Standards and should not be treated as equivalent to instructor-led, integrated programs.

There are no shortcuts to Safety.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this statement for the record.

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