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ON BEHALF OF ADVOCATES FOR HIGHWAY AND AUTO SAFETY

ON

"ENHANCING VEHICLE TECHNOLOGY TO PREVENT DRUNK DRIVING"

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Introduction

Chairwoman Schakowsky, Ranking Member McMorris Rodgers, and Members of the Consumer Protection and Commerce Subcommittee, my name is Joan Claybrook. I am a Board member and former Consumer Co-Chair of the Board of Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety (Advocates). I am testifying this morning on behalf of Advocates, an organization I helped to establish in 1989. I have been involved in highway and auto safety throughout most of my career including working for the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) when it was first established in 1966. I was appointed by President Jimmy Carter as Administrator of NHTSA and served in that post from 1977 to 1981.

Advocates is a unique coalition of public health, safety and consumer organizations, insurers and insurance agents that promotes highway and auto safety through the adoption of federal and state laws, policies and regulations. This year Advocates marks three decades of working to prevent crashes, deaths and injuries through the advancement of safer vehicles, safer drivers and passengers, and safer roads and infrastructure.

Advocates Consistently Promotes Proven Technology to Save Lives and Prevent Injuries

Advocates always has enthusiastically championed proven vehicle safety technology and for good reason -- it is one of the most effective strategies for preventing deaths and injuries. NHTSA has estimated that since 1960, over 600,000 lives have been saved by motor vehicle safety technologies.[1] In 1991, Advocates led the coalition that supported enactment of the bipartisan Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) of 1991[2] which included a mandate for front seat airbags as standard equipment. As a result, by 1997, every new car sold in the United States was equipped with this technology and the lives saved have been significant.

Between 2007 and 2016 airbags saved approximately 2,500 lives annually,[3] and have saved an estimated 47,648 lives from 1987 to 2016, according to NHTSA.[4]

Advocates continued to build on this success by supporting additional proven lifesaving technologies as standard equipment in all vehicles in other federal legislation and regulatory proposals. These efforts include: tire pressure monitoring systems;[5] rear outboard 3-point safety belts;[6] electronic stability control;[7] rear safety belt reminder systems;[8] brake transmission interlocks;[9] safety belts on motorcoaches;[10] electronic logging devices for commercial motor vehicles (CMVs)[11]; and, others. These advances have saved hundreds of thousands of lives. Safety equipment such as airbags and safety belts are the first line of defense for an occupant involved in a crash caused by an impaired driver.

Advocates, together with KidsAndCars.org, is proud to have worked with Subcommittee Chair Jan Schakowsky on the enactment of legislation requiring the installation of rearview cameras in all new motor vehicles as of May 2018.[12] Without Representative Schakowsky's tireless efforts and leadership, this landmark law would never have been enacted and children would have continued to been killed and seriously injured because of dangerous blind spots.

Further, Advocates has been a leading safety voice in the fight against alcohol-impaired driving. Our organization supported the development of breathalyzer technology which is essential to enforcement of impaired driving laws and keeping drunk drivers off the road. Additionally, together with Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), Advocates was a principal supporter in federal and state efforts to reduce blood alcohol content (BAC) laws from .10 to .08 percent and achieve a national law. In fact, Advocates' founding Board Member Andrew McGuire,

Executive Director of the Trauma Foundation, joined the Board of MADD in January 1981, only months after it was created and served as its Acting Executive Director in 1983. And, as NHTSA Administrator in 1980, I authorized giving MADD its first government grant for its work on reducing drinking and driving. Lastly, Advocates has a long-standing policy in favor of establishing a national .05 percent BAC threshold for drunk driving. Preventing impaired driving is an integral and vital part of Advocates' federal and state legislative program.

Motor Vehicle Deaths Remain Unacceptably High and Impaired Driving is a Significant Threat to Public Safety

According to the federal government, each year motor vehicle crashes kill tens of thousands of people and injure millions more at a cost to society of over $800 billion.[13] According to the latest statistics from NHTSA, 37,133 people were killed on our Nation's roads in 2017.[14] Despite these abysmal figures, this week the Administration proposed cutting NHTSA's budget in FY 2020 by $37 million.[15] We strongly oppose this detrimental reduction which will weaken the abilities of the agency charged with protecting motorists.

The grim reality is that an average of one alcohol-impaired-driving fatality occurs every 48 minutes.[16] In 2017, 10,874 people were killed in crashes involving a drunk driver, accounting for nearly a third of all traffic fatalities (29 percent).[17] Sadly, 220 of these fatalities were children.[18] Of these young fatalities, a staggering 54 percent were occupants of vehicles with drivers who had a BAC of 0.08 percent or higher.[19] These are not just statistics. These are real people, whose lives have been unnecessarily cut short and whose families have been torn apart.

Shockingly, research has shown that about one-third of all drivers arrested or convicted of drunk driving are repeat offenders.[20] According to MADD, arrest data from the Federal Bureau of Investigation reveals that an average drunk driver has driven drunk over 80 times before a first arrest.[21] These stark figures provide the rational for the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) to consistently list ending impaired driving on their Most Wanted List of Transportation Safety Improvements, including the 2019-2020 list released just last month. [22]

In addition to an excruciating emotional toll, these crashes impose a substantial economic burden. According to NHTSA, the estimated economic cost of all alcohol-impaired crashes in the United States in 2010 (the most recent year for which cost data is available) was $44 billion.[23]

The positive news is that the number of lives lost to drunk drivers has decreased from previous decades thanks to the enactment of strong laws, more effective enforcement, the hard work and passion of MADD, Advocates and numerous other public health and safety organizations, and dedicated law enforcement officials. Nonetheless, far too many people are still being killed in drunk driving crashes. In fact, since the mid-1990s, the percentage of drunk driving fatalities has plateaued indicating that progress has stagnated and even reversed.[24]

Despite these dismal statistics, progress can be achieved with concerted action by state and federal elected officials and authorities. Last year two states, Idaho and Iowa, enacted all-offender ignition interlock device (IID) laws, bringing the total to 32 states and the District of Columbia with this lifesaving law. Additionally, Advocates commends the leadership of Representative Debbie Dingell (D-MI) for her recent introduction of legislation to reduce drunk

driving, deaths and injuries following the horrific drunk driving crash that killed five members of the Abbas family from Northville, Michigan.

As Administrator of NHTSA from 1977-1981, I recognized the unacceptable human and financial toll inflicted upon our society by individuals who chose to get behind the wheel of a vehicle while impaired. As such, I built on the work of my predecessors and supported increased federal funding for enforcement to get drunk drivers off the road and for research to identify tools to prevent them from operating a vehicle. Even still, nearly four decades after my tenure, this problem persists while data driven countermeasures languish.

Technology and Lowering the Legal BAC Limit Can Prevent Impaired Driving Crashes

Solutions to meaningfully reduce the incidence of impaired driving and the resulting fatalities, injuries and costs include technology such as IIDs, as mentioned above, and sensor technology. These systems can help prevent vehicles from being operated by an individual that is intoxicated from alcohol. Offenders required to install an IID on their vehicle must blow into an IID to demonstrate they are not alcohol impaired or the vehicle's engine will not start. The driver is then required to blow into the IID at certain intervals while operating the vehicle. According to data from the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) in 2009, if IIDs were in all cars, more than 8,000 lives could have been saved the preceding year.[25]

Laws requiring all convicted drunk drivers to use an IID have been shown to be incredibly effective. In fact, when West Virginia adopted its IID program, recidivism was reduced by an amazing 77 percent among first-time offenders.[26] As such, Congress and NHTSA should continue to motivate states to enact this lifesaving law and consider the addition of sanctions for

states that fail to act. Federal legislation enacted with the warning of financial sanctions encouraged states to adopt a 21 minimum drinking age, a zero tolerance BAC law for underage drinking and driving, and a .08 percent BAC law.[27] Every one of these federal laws resulted in every state acting, and not a single state lost a dollar of federal highway construction money.

The further development of touch-based and passive breath sensor technology that detects if a driver is alcohol intoxicated also holds great promise to help reduce drunk driving crashes. Considerable research has gone into developing the Driver Alcohol Detection System for Safety, known as DADSS. Research on DADSS commenced in 2008 as a collaborative research partnership between the Automotive Coalition for Traffic Safety (ACTS), representing 17 automobile manufacturers, and NHTSA.[28] This work has developed two systems for preventing the operation of vehicles by impaired individuals. The first is a passive, breath-based technology which samples the air a driver breathes out, measures the alcohol and carbon dioxide in that sample, and determines the corresponding BAC level. This process is non-intrusive and does not require the driver to blow into a tube as with IIDs. The second is a touch based sensor installed as a pad in the vehicle. The pad uses light to determine the BAC based on how the light is reflected from the user's skin.

After more than a decade of research and millions of dollars provided by Congress, NHTSA and the industry should be doing all they can to get this technology into vehicles without further delay. Placing DADSS into a fleet of federally owned vehicles may be the best way to further advance this potentially lifesaving technology. Such an approach has worked previously. In 1984, the General Services Administration (GSA) purchased 5,000 vehicles with airbags before the equipment was required to be in all vehicles.[29] This approach provided NHTSA with

invaluable on-road performance data demonstrating the benefits of airbags.[30] Employing a similar strategy with DADSS would allow the agency to evaluate the current state of the technology so that it can verify its capabilities and accelerate wide-scale deployment. In addition, installing DADSS in a federal fleet would further improve the safety of cars operated by federal employees.

Lowering the Legal BAC Threshold Saves Lives

Congress, as part of the fiscal year 2001 U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) appropriations bill, included a requirement that states lower the legal threshold for drunk driving from .10 to .08 percent BAC by 2004 or lose federal funding.[31] By 2005, all states had a .08 percent BAC law in effect and no state lost any highway funds.[32] Research has estimated that lowering the BAC threshold to .08 has saved over 24,000 lives.[33] Lowering the legal BAC threshold to .05 will result in similar benefits to public safety. If all states adopted a .05 percent BAC or lower law, our Nation would experience an 11 percent decline in fatal alcohol crashes and 1,790 lives would be saved annually.[34]

At .05 percent BAC, a driver is impaired and exhibits reduced coordination, reduced ability to track moving objects, difficulty steering, and reduced response to emergency driving situations.[35] Lowering the BAC to .05 percent has been shown to have a broad deterrent effect that reduces the incidence of drunk driving at all levels of impairment.[36] Approximately 100 countries have some type of .05 percent or lower BAC law.[37] While their average alcohol consumption is the same or higher than the U.S., their alcohol-related deaths are lower.[38]

Recognizing the compelling research and studies of real-world experience, in 2017, Utah became the first state in the Nation to enact legislation to lower the BAC threshold for driving to .05 percent.[39] The law went into effect on December 30, 2018. Advocates promoted adoption of the law and worked with legislators, the Governor and Utah groups on the successful legislative effort in Utah and is currently urging other states to pass this law. Congress should once again take the lead on this urgent public safety issue by offering incentive grants to encourage states to lower the BAC threshold for drunk driving to save lives followed by withholding of federal funding for states that fail to amend their statutes.

Additional Advanced Vehicle Technologies are Available Now that Can Prevent Drunk Driving Crashes

Research conducted by IIHS has demonstrated that current advanced driver assistance systems (ADAS), such as automatic emergency braking (AEB), lane departure warning and blind spot detection, have safety benefits by reducing crashes.[40] Yet, none of these systems are required to be standard equipment on all vehicles. In fact, many of these technologies are offered on only the most expensive models or are as part of costly luxury packages that include non-safety items. Thus, many consumers are not afforded the lifesaving benefits of this safety equipment.

To reduce preventable crashes including those caused by impaired driving, Congress should require that these proven technologies, shown to prevent or mitigate crashes, be standard equipment on all new vehicles by issuing new federal motor vehicle safety standards. Specifically, absent timely federal agency action, the U.S. DOT should be required by legislation to issue minimum performance standards for front and rear automatic braking technology that is responsive to vehicles, pedestrians, bicyclists and other vulnerable road users to prevent crashes

in which the driver is impaired, distracted or otherwise does not brake in order to avert a collision. The U.S. DOT also must issue minimum performance standards for other proven ADAS technology including but not limited to lane departure warning and blind spot detection.

Law Enforcement Officers Must be Given the Tools They Need to Combat Drunk Drivers

Law enforcement officers risk their lives on a daily basis to help prevent drunk driving. In 2015, Montgomery County Maryland Police Officer Noah Leotta was struck and killed by a drunk driver when working on a sobriety task force.[41] Tragically, Officer Leotta is but one example of the losses incurred by law enforcement in the line of duty working to prevent drunk driving. Congress must continue to provide law enforcement with adequate funding and resources needed for training programs to identify impaired drivers, upgrade enforcement techniques and conduct sobriety checkpoints. Effective enforcement is a key component in combating this major threat to public safety.

Drugged Driving Safety Concerns

Impaired driving not only occurs when a driver has been drinking. It is clear that drug use and misuse is a serious concern. While some reports show that the incidence of drug use, which includes legal, illegal, and prescription drugs, in fatally injured drivers is on the rise, drug use as a causal factor in traffic crashes remains uncertain. Generally, a correlation between drug use, specific drug levels in the body, and impairment is unresolved. However, a recent Columbia University study found that in fatal two-passenger crashes in which only one driver was identified as initiating the crash, drivers who initiated crashes were 67 percent more likely to test positive for prescription opioids.[42] This finding was independent of alcohol use. Moreover,

when drug and alcohol use are combined, known as "polyuse", the effects of impairment for a driver can be amplified.

A recent study by IIHS revealed that crashes have increased in states where recreational marijuana has been legalized, although IIHS notes marijuana's role in crashes at this time is not as clear as the link between alcohol and crashes.[43] There is an urgent need for more information and data to have a better understanding of drug impairment including specific amounts in the body, how often drug-impaired driving is occurring and the implications for traffic safety. The better, and faster, that we have data on this problem, the better our ability to combat it will be. In the meantime, what is painfully certain is that alcohol impairment of drivers continues to be the largest single contributor to traffic fatalities in the United States.[44]

Additional Actions to Reduce Motor Vehicle Crash Fatalities

In addition to the commonsense solutions provided above, additional actions are at hand that can protect the public from the threat and scourge of alcohol impaired driving.

Ensure the Safe Development and Deployment of Autonomous Vehicles

Advocates believes that autonomous vehicles (AVs) have the potential to make meaningful and lasting reductions in the number of deaths and injuries that occur each year on our Nation's roads, including those involving a drunk driver. However, deploying AVs before they can be safely operated on public roads and without government oversight, industry accountability and transparency for consumers is not only irresponsible and ill-advised, but it will also substantially reduce public confidence in this new technology.

Numerous public opinion polls show strong public skepticism and reticence about AVs.[45] Those doubts are warranted based on recent crashes as well as the past conduct of automakers. Over the last few years, automakers have hidden from the American public and regulators safety defects which have led to numerous unacceptable and unnecessary deaths and injuries and the recall of tens of millions of vehicles.[46] Consumer acceptance of AV technology is crucial to its success and to fully realizing its lifesaving potential. Right now families know that when they go into auto showrooms to buy a new car, the federal government has protections in place to ensure their safety. Similar oversight and regulation are needed for AVs to both assure and safeguard consumers, especially when considering the recent auto industry history of defects and cover-ups.

The current hype and artificial urgency to deploy immature AVs is disconnected from public opinion as well as the reality that serious and fatal crashes have revealed flaws in this still developing technology. On May 7, 2016, in Williston, Florida, a Tesla Model S on "Autopilot" struck and passed beneath a semitrailer killing the driver.[47] On January 22, 2018, in Culver City, California, another Tesla Model S operating on "Autopilot" collided with a parked fire truck that was responding to the scene of a separate crash.[48] Remarkably, neither this Tesla driver nor any first responders were injured.[49] On March 18, 2018, in Tempe, Arizona, an Uber test vehicle operating on self-driving mode struck and killed a pedestrian walking with a bicycle.[50] Then, just a few days later on March 23, 2018, in Mountain View, California, a Tesla Model X operating on "Autopilot" collided with a safety barrier resulting in the death of the driver.[51] According to the NTSB preliminary report on the crash, the vehicle was being operated under "Autopilot", had moved out of the lane of travel on its own and accelerated to 70 miles-per-hour (MPH) before colliding with the barrier.[52] The collision and subsequent intense fire closed the freeway for at least five hours.[53] On May 29, 2018, a Tesla Model S operating on "Autopilot"

struck a parked police vehicle in Laguna Beach, California.[54] The NTSB has investigated or is investigating a number of these crashes[55] including another crash involving a Tesla vehicle that happened just this month.[56]

In addition to the crashes that have already occurred involving autonomous systems, data accumulated from the limited miles traveled also paints an alarming picture. In 2017, the latest year for which final data is available, on average a person was killed in a traffic collision every 86.2 million miles traveled on U.S. roads.[57] Before the fatal crash in Arizona, Uber had reportedly logged two million autonomous miles as of the end of 2017 and was predicted to accrue another one million miles over the next 100 days.[58] Based on a simple evaluation of this data, the autonomous Uber had one fatality in three million miles; that is a fatality rate 28 times that of human drivers. This analysis highlights just how little proof there is that these systems are safe. While it must be stated that the Uber crash is a single data point and may not be necessarily indicative of future performance statistically, if we are going to ignore this data point, then AV manufacturers must likewise stop touting the millions of miles their AVs have driven as evidence of their safety. The fact is that the industry has yet to prove the safety of these systems and has yet to even agree upon a metric or method for comparing the safety of these systems. Nonetheless, they are strongly pushing to allow these vehicles into showrooms and onto the roads. Moreover, these numbers pale in comparison to the more than three *trillion* miles traveled by human drivers on U.S. roads each year.[59]

Rushing the technology to market under the guise of advancing safety is not only reckless but will ultimately prove deadly. While in the future AVs could be an essential component of reducing crashes due to driver misjudgment, error, or blatant disregard for the rules of the road,

including drinking and driving, we must not simply replace "human error" with "computer error." For the benefits of AV technology to be realized, Congress and the U.S. DOT must: require minimum levels for AV safety performance; establish strong public safeguards including a vision standard, a cybersecurity standard, a driver engagement standard for Level 2 and 3 AVs, and an electronics performance safety standard; and, require robust reporting, data collection and transparency to assess the on-road performance of AVs. Advocates looks forward to working with the Subcommittee to accomplish this goal in furtherance of reducing, and even eliminating, impaired driving fatalities.

Facilitate Connected Vehicle Technology

Connected vehicle technologies which allow a vehicle to send and receive communications with other vehicles (vehicle-to-vehicle (V2V)) and the infrastructure (vehicle-to-infrastructure (V2I)) can assist vehicles and operators to prevent or mitigate a crash with a drunk driver. These messages can relay information ranging from the relative location and direction of motion of other vehicles to warning messages that traffic lights are about to change or adverse weather conditions are soon to be encountered. For instance, V2V communication can provide safety applications for ADAS such as Left Turn Assist (LTA) and Forward Collision Warning (FCW). LTA warns drivers to the presence of oncoming, opposite-direction traffic when attempting a left turn. FCW warns drivers of stopped, slowing or slower vehicles ahead.

In a 2017 Notice of Proposed Rulemaking to require V2V technology, NHTSA noted that "[b]ecause of V2V's ability to provide vehicles with information beyond a vehicle's range of perception, V2V is the only source of information that supports applications like Intersection Movement Assist (IMA) and Left Turn Assist (LTA). These applications have the unique ability to address intersection crashes, which are among the most deadly crashes that drivers currently

face in the U.S."[60] Advocates filed comments in support of requiring V2V because of the technology's ability to help prevent serious crashes.[61] However, despite the identified safety benefits of V2V technology, this rule is languishing at DOT.

Enhance Pedestrian, Bicyclist and Vulnerable Road User Safety

Pedestrians and bicyclists are also vulnerable to impaired drivers. There are ways to mitigate injuries so that being hit by a car does not have to be a death sentence. Advocates and other safety groups have been urging Congress to require NHTSA to issue a safety standard for the hood and bumper areas of motor vehicles in order to reduce the severity of injuries suffered by pedestrians, bicyclists and other vulnerable roads users that frequently result in death and lifelong disabilities. Such a standard has been in place in Europe for years.[62] Just as added padding and restraint systems provide occupant protection inside the vehicle in the event of a crash, design improvements to the hood and bumper, which are already available on some makes and models sold in the U.S., can afford pedestrians, bicyclists and other road users protection on the outside of the vehicle in the event of a crash.

Improving the visibility of vulnerable road users can also reap measurable safety benefits. According to IIHS, just over half of the vehicle models the organization evaluated in 2018 are available with headlights that do just an "adequate job of lighting the road at night."[63] However, IIHS noted that most "good-rated" headlights are optional or bundled with features that can raise the price of the vehicle.[64] Headlights are one of the most effective crash avoidance equipment on a vehicle.[65] As such, Congress should direct NHTSA to upgrade the outdated standard for headlights by a near-term certain date. They can also help to assure that AVs can properly "see" the roadway, signage, stop signals, and off-road stopping space.

Moreover, our Nation's infrastructure is crumbling. According to the 2017 Infrastructure Report Card from the American Society of Civil Engineers, America's roads receive a grade of "D" and bridges are given a grade of "C+".[66] The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) estimates that $142 billion in capital investment would be needed on an annual basis over the next 20 years to vastly improve conditions and performance of our Nation's road and bridges.[67] Repairing infrastructure will bolster public safety and help to prevent crashes. As part of these upgrades, federal funding should be allocated to roadway safety infrastructure improvements such as physical barriers that separate vehicular traffic from pedestrians, bicyclists and other vulnerable road users. These barriers and other such investments can help to prevent drunk drivers from killing innocent road users.

Update the New Car Assessment Program

While serving as the Administrator of NHTSA, I established the New Car Assessment Program (NCAP) which is celebrating its 40th anniversary this year. By any measure NCAP has been exceedingly successful. This program of crashing testing vehicles and disclosing the results by make and model has been emulated throughout the world and has provided necessary safety information to consumers for decades. NCAP is an invaluable tool in helping to ensure Americans have the information they need in order to purchase safe vehicles that will protect them and their families. As NHTSA stated last year, "[f]rom its inception, NCAP has played a significant role in educating consumers on vehicle safety as a key factor in their vehicle purchasing decisions."[68] In addition, the public disclosure of the safety performance of vehicles by make and model under this program serves as an important incentive for automakers to place the latest safety technologies into their vehicles.

NCAP can provide safety benefits by harnessing market forces to encourage the early adoption and implementation of new safety technologies that can help to prevent crashes involving an impaired driver. However, these benefits can be undercut when safety performance requirements are not established and when safety systems are not calculated as part of the star rating on which consumers rely most readily when comparing vehicles. Therefore, currently available technologies that have already been proven to have substantial safety benefits should be added to the rating program. These technologies should be part of the NCAP rating program to further facilitate their widespread dissemination into new vehicles. In addition, Advocates concurs with the NTSB recent recommendation that pedestrian safety injury mitigation systems including pedestrian collision avoidance systems be included in NCAP.[69] All of these upgrades to NCAP will enhance public safety by encouraging more automakers to place proven safety technologies into more vehicles.

Improve the Safety of Vehicles Involved in a Drunk Driving Crash

One of the most important defenses for motorists involved in a crash with a drunk driver is a safe car. Improving the safety of a vehicle involved in a crash with a drunk driver will save lives and prevent injuries. As noted above, tragically, children are often helpless victims of drunk driving crashes. Just last month, five children were killed in a crash in Maryland and reports indicate the driver was severely impaired and that none of the children were properly restrained.[70] Ensuring that all occupants including children are properly restrained improves crash survivability. Unfortunately, NHTSA has yet to issue a rule requiring rear safety belt reminders in all vehicles despite being required to so by Congress in the 2012 Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21) Act.[71] Rear safety belt reminders are available on a number of vehicles here

in the United States and are standard equipment on several models tested by Euro NCAP.[72] These systems increase safety belt use and should be standard equipment in all vehicles.

Furthermore, vehicle occupants, especially children, can suffer serious injury or death in crashes when a vehicle is struck on the far side from where they are seated. The collision does not activate the airbags where the child is seated when s/he is seated in the opposite side of a side impact crash. As a result, the child can strike the closest side of the vehicle or other occupants seated next to them. Yet, currently there is not a federal motor vehicle safety standard for these types of far side impact crashes. Advocates urges Congress to direct NHTSA to issue such a safety standard.

Expand the National Priority Safety Program

The National Priority Safety Program, reauthorized by the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act in 2015, provides federal funding to the states through grants administered by NHTSA for activities that can reduce deaths and injuries suffered on our Nation's roads.[73] The program provides grants for the following safety priorities: occupant protection; state traffic safety improvements; impaired driving; motorcycle safety; distracted driving; and, graduated driver licensing (GDL).[74] As discussed above, Advocates continues to strongly support and encourage the enactment of state statutes that require the installation of IIDs for all offenders convicted of impaired driving. When an intoxicated driver gets behind the wheel and causes a crash, one of the most important protections for the innocent victims of that crash is a safety belt. However, a safety belt is only effective when it is worn by an occupant. In fact, nearly half of all passenger vehicle occupants killed were not buckled when restraint use was known.[75] Therefore, Congress should establish an additional grant when it reauthorizes the

National Priority Safety Program to encourage states to enact safety belt laws that are subject to primary enforcement and apply to all occupants followed by a withholding of federal funding for states that fail to enact these lifesaving statutes. These laws, which allow law enforcement officers to cite occupants for not wearing a safety belt without having to first observe another traffic violation such, as speeding and red light running, have been shown to increase safety belt usage.[76] Currently, only 19 states and the District of Columbia have all-occupant primary enforcement safety belt laws.[77] Ensuring that all occupants in a vehicle are wearing safety belts is a critical component to helping them survive a crash with a drunk driver.

Conclusion

Far too many lives are lost and families destroyed by the senseless and preventable crime of operating a vehicle while impaired. Deaths caused by drunk driving can be reduced with bold federal action, wider use of proven safety technologies both in and outside a vehicle, enactment of proven state laws, and aggressive and enhanced law enforcement. By deploying all of these known sensible solutions we can once again make significant progress in reducing deadly drunk driving crashes. Thank you for the invitation to testify before you today.

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