

Mr. Chairman and committee members:

Thank you for granting me the opportunity to speak. My name is Maria Cruz, from Middletown, CT. I come here today as a former member of Governor Rell's Task Force on Teen Driving, a mother, a concerned citizen, and a driving instructor, to support HB 5648.

It was my privilege to serve last year on Governor Rell's Task Force on Teen Driving. We worked very hard for many months to come up with recommendations that would hopefully reduce the horrific numbers of teenagers killed on our roads each year, as well as to increase overall safety for the driving public. It was not always easy for twenty three individuals with their own ideas, experiences, and from all different walks of life to reach conclusions or consensus. We never the less managed, by the end, to come up with a document we were all proud to have our names on.

Being intimately familiar with the work of the task force, I was shocked upon learning of the DMV's intention to eliminate the written test at the time of GDL testing. Instead, a single written test would be administered only at the time of permit issuance. I was further shocked to learn that this was being attributed to a task force recommendation. Having attended and participated in all the meetings, taken copious notes, having read all hand-outs at meetings and e-mails sent between meetings, I was dumbfounded as to how I could have missed something so radical and ill-conceived. I then proceeded to pour through every piece of paper I had collected over those many months; to reread everything.

As I suspected, I had not missed anything. Not only had we not recommended the elimination of the written test at the time of licensing, we had recommended the opposite. The task force discussed the process of obtaining a permit and recommended specific restrictions to be placed on permit holders. Although it was discussed, we never voted on any changes to the written test at the time of obtaining a permit. We did, however, discuss and reach unanimous consensus on requiring a longer, more comprehensive written test at the time of a teen obtaining a Graduated Driver's License.

The following is from Section IV of the Task Force Long-Term Recommendations, page 18, final edition dated May 30, 2008. The full report was sent to Governor Rell, with a cover letter of the same date, signed by Commissioner Robert Ward of the Department of Motor Vehicles, and Commissioner J. Robert Galvin, of the Department of Public Health.

**10) RECOMMENDATION**

***DMV should develop a more comprehensive and uniform evaluation of licensees based on specific criteria for the behind the wheel exam. It should increase the number of written exam questions with a higher percentage of correct answers required to obtain a GDL.***

**Rationale:** Increase the level of knowledge and skill required to pass a license examination, thereby ensuring a more skilled and knowledgeable teen driver. It is clear that many teen applicants study and practice only to the extent that they feel is necessary to pass test and become licensed.

In conclusion, how this could be construed by the DMV to mean that a final written test could be eliminated by increasing the number of questions on the permit test is beyond me, but I feel confident assuring the members of this committee that such was never the intention of the task force. The recommendation specifies a longer written exam to obtain a GDL, not a permit. We did not give the DMV our blessing to replace the license test with the permit test. The rationale explains that a teen will study as little as possible, which means that as of now, they need not study ever again after obtaining a permit. I will leave the driving school representatives here today to testify as to the adverse effect that such a poor decision has had on their ability to get teenagers to take their lessons seriously. Thank you for your time.