



State of Connecticut

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Testimony in support of HB 5385 AAC the Use of Ignition Interlock Devices

Chairman Defronzo, Chairman Guerrero, Ranking Member Boucher, Ranking Member Scribner, thank you for taking the time to hear HB 5385 AAC the Use of Ignition Interlock Devices a bill that I consider a key tool for protecting public safety. I have always been a strong supporter for enhanced penalties for drunk drivers and I look forward to working with you to pass this bill.

According to Mothers Against Drunk Driving on average someone is killed by a drunk driver every 45 minutes. In 2008, an estimated 11,773 people died in drunk driving related crashes—a decline of 9.8 percent from the 13,041 drunk driving related fatalities of 2007. Although these numbers show significant improvement from 2007 to 2008, there is still a lot of work to be done.

One of the reasons this bill is so crucial is the fact that one-third of all drivers arrested or convicted of driving while intoxicated or driving under the influence of alcohol are repeat offenders. Further, one arrest is made for driving under the influence for every 772 episodes of driving within two hours of drinking and for every 88 episodes of driving over the illegal limit in the U.S. These two statistics show the need for ignition interlock devices is real and immediate.

One of the leaders in the area of ignition interlock equipped vehicles is the state of New Mexico. The NM Ignition Interlock law went in to effect on June 17, 2005. It mandated an ignition interlock license and the installation of the device for anyone, in the state of New Mexico, convicted of a DWI. This includes first time DWI offenders. A year after enacting this DUI law, New Mexico detailed how ignition interlock law had helped reduce drunk driving fatalities by 12 percent. Just last year, New Mexico ignition interlock devices kept some 63,000 people from starting their cars. That's evidence enough for me that the program has saved lives and is something that should be adopted here in Connecticut.

This committee has done a superb job in protecting the driving public. Recently, you saw fit to pass the graduated licensing law which put strict rules on teen driving. Let's pass this bill and take another huge step toward improving the safety for all drivers. Thank you for taking the time to raise this crucial piece of legislation.