

To Whom It May Concern:

I urge you to reconsider replacing the instructor run, classroom-based boating course with an online course. The operation of a vessel on the water takes just as much skill as the operation of a car on our roads and highways. The thought of allowing new drivers to attain their license by passing an Internet-based course, with no instruction from a human being, would be considered absurd by an overwhelmingly large portion of the population. It is equally absurd to think someone should be able to get behind the wheel and throttle of a boat without being provided with proper safety training from a skilled instructor.

Children go to school not only to learn from their teachers, but also from their peers. The same goes for those who are pursuing the ability to operate a vessel by taking in-class instruction. They learn from one another, and most importantly have the ability to ask questions.

Just last summer, my entire family was nearly killed by an irresponsible boater. As I was waterskiing behind my 19 foot ski boat, another vessel of 7 teens narrowly (and I truly mean narrowly) missed smashing into my boat as they were towing a tuber. I watched from that ski as the boat headed straight towards my family, sharply turning at the very last second and consequently shrouding my boat in a wall of water. Their tuber went flying in a whip and around my boat. I truly believed, for about three seconds, that my family had been hit as I was sent careening into the water after my mother threw the throttled into neutral to prevent a collision. Needless to say, that incident scarred my sisters and I for what likely will be life. We all realize how important it is to have a quality education on boating safety and vessel operation.

My parents have been operating boats on Port Jefferson Harbor on the North Shore of Long Island for over three decades. I grew up on the very same waterways, with my parents, along with many aunts, uncles, and friends, teaching me to respect and be cautious of my surroundings. When it came time for my sisters and I to be able to operate our own boats, we were enrolled in the appropriate courses. My cousins and friends took the courses alongside us, with the aim to create a knowledgeable and safety-conscious "crew" for both our benefit and the benefit of those enjoying their boats around us. I'm now 19 and I understand why my parents were so very persistent in teaching me how to be a responsible boat owner. Owning and operating a vessel is a privilege. Those who want that privilege bestowed upon them should have to learn, just as I did, from a knowledgeable classroom instructor and their peers. Taking an examination online, for which one could easily access the answers on Google, will do very little to teach the importance of "boating safety". Again, would you feel comfortable allowing drivers on the road after passing a course that provides them with no human interaction? It is not acceptable to allow someone to operate a 20 foot long, 3,000lb vessel that can achieve speeds of 45mph and has NO BRAKES without proper training. Please, I urge you to reconsider the changes to boating safety that have been considered- for the benefit of new vessel operators and all others who will be out on the water enjoying themselves. A proper education is paramount to the prevention of a terrible tragedy.

Respectfully,

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