



**Testimony from Fran Mayko, Public Affairs Coordinator
AAA Northeast before the Transportation Committee on
SB 488 – An Act Concerning Availability of the Drug and Alcohol
Education Class required for an Operator’s License
February 9, 2015**

Mr. Chairman and members of the Transportation Committee . . .

My name is Fran Mayko. I am public affairs coordinator for AAA Northeast. We serve more than a half million AAA members in Fairfield, New Haven, and Litchfield Counties.

I thank you for this opportunity to speak on behalf of **SB 488**. This bill would allow licensed driver education instructors to teach the mandated eight-hour Safe Driving practices class in locations other than certified driving schools. It would also require driving schools to offer an online version of the class.

First, AAA Northeast supports the concept of offering an online version of the eight-hour Safe Driving Practices class.

Colleges, universities, trade associations -- nearly every organization that provides training -- offers some form of e-learning. Online driver’s education should be no different. In fact, 22 states now allow for online driver’s education and proposals are being considered this year in Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Maine and New Hampshire.

Having said that, AAA Northeast believes online driver’s education should **NOT** be mandatory. Instead, we feel it should be one option for busy families: either they take this class online or, as some may prefer, attend in-class sessions at a Connecticut driving school.

But because we feel this specific bill is short on details, AAA Northeast has some concerns. For example, it would allow licensed driving instructors to “moonlight” without a Connecticut driving school affiliation. In the state, licensed instructors are now required by law to be affiliated with a certified school. This is a way to maintain high-quality teaching and curriculum standards for novice drivers.

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We also feel the bill's July 1 deadline is unrealistic. Instead we suggest you delay online implementation for at least six months after the bill becomes law. This will allow both the DMV and interested stakeholders to consider investment and staffing issues and develop high-quality online standards.

As one final suggestion, AAA proposes that students who do pursue the online option be required to complete 10 hours of behind-the-wheel training at a licensed Connecticut driving school. We feel this requirement will further ensure a potential driver's ability to apply the principles learned in the online class that ultimately will allow them to become better, safer drivers on Connecticut's roads.

If done properly, online learning can be an engaging and effective learning tool; it offers consumers flexibility, convenience, and lower cost. More important, however, it appeals to a developing demographic that has grown up with computers, Kindles, and iPhones.

I strongly urge you to reject SB 488 as it now stands.

I do, however, strongly urge you to support online education of the state's mandatory alcohol and drug class by incorporating some of our solutions. AAA's National Office has vast experience with online driver education and is available to assist you in providing a more detailed look at this issue, if you feel it would be helpful.

Thank you for the opportunity to express our concerns.

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