



Testimony Supporting S.B. 925: An Act Concerning An Advanced Operator's Retraining Program

Tara Leystra Ackerman
State Government Affairs Manager, National Safety Council
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Chairman Leone, Chairman Lemar, Ranking member Martin, Ranking Member Devlin and esteemed members of the Committee on Transportation, thank you for the opportunity to present testimony supporting **S.B. 925: An Act Concerning An Advanced Operator's Retraining Program**.

My name is Tara Leystra, and I am testifying on behalf of the National Safety Council (NSC), a nonprofit organization with the mission of eliminating preventable deaths at work, in homes and communities, and on the road through leadership, research, education and advocacy. Our more than 15,000 member companies represent employees at more than 50,000 U.S. worksites, including nearly 500 in Connecticut. In addition, NSC is a proud participant in the state's Operator Retraining Program (ORP) for drivers convicted of moving or suspension violations.

NSC also leads the Road to Zero coalition, which is a joint effort with the United States Department of Transportation, to eliminate roadway fatalities by 2050. The coalition includes nearly 900 members who share this goal, many in Connecticut. You can read the coalition report on the [web](#) outlining the three pillars we must focus on to reach this goal: doubling down on programs we know work, accelerating life-saving technology and creating a road-safety culture by prioritizing safety. The coalition has annually awarded local grants to projects that implement these goals, including the Hartford-based [Center for Latino Progress](#), which was awarded a grant last year to work on vulnerable road user safety.

For the third year in a row, NSC analysis shows that at least 40,000 people were killed in motor vehicle related crashes, with 297 lives lost in Connecticut.ⁱ While there are many causes of traffic fatalities, human error plays a major role. There is clearly a need to provide better education to all drivers on our roads, and this is especially true for individuals whose driver's license is suspended due to repeated moving violations.

NSC supports S.B. 925, which would require drivers who have their license suspended for the second time in 36 months due to moving violations or a suspension violation to take a behavior-based driver retraining course before they can have their license reinstated.

Of course, there are consequences when a person can no longer drive that impact all parts of an offender's life. More than 85 percent of Americans drive to work, and in many cases, jobs require a valid driver's license as a condition of employment.ⁱⁱ When a person loses his or her license, s/he risks losing his or her livelihood as well.^{iii,iv} A study in New Jersey found that nearly 45 percent of drivers who had their license suspended lost their jobs, with 45 percent of those individuals unable to find another one while their license was suspended.^v



However, it is important to remember drivers who have a suspended license due to poor driving behavior are clearly a safety hazard to the general public, and their dangerous behavior needs to be addressed. Another study found that nineteen percent of drivers suspended for traffic safety reasons were involved in a crash during their suspension period, compared to 3.1 percent of licensed drivers.^{vi} This is a six-fold increase in crash occurrence. Additionally, a study done by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) found that 30 percent of suspended drivers were caught committing another moving violation while their license was suspended.^{vii}

Currently, suspending a driver's license is the most accepted punishment for someone who receives multiple traffic infractions. Yet data shows suspending a license as the only punishment does not change dangerous driving behavior, nor does it keep repeat traffic offenders off the roads. The American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators estimates that 75 percent of people who have a suspended license continue to drive.^{viii}

The best means of addressing problem drivers and change future driving behavior is through educational programs that serve as an instructional intervention for repeat traffic offenders. NSC fully supports requiring mandatory education for repeat offenders of traffic safety laws as called for in S.B. 925.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts adopted such a program in 1994, requiring its repeat traffic offenders to complete a driver retraining program. When drivers in the Commonwealth accumulate three surchargeable^{ix} violations within a 24-month period, the law requires the completion of a driver retraining program. Massachusetts is unique in that the law allows the individual to avoid suspension as long as s/he completes the driver retraining program within 90 days. If the driver fails to complete the program within 90 days, the license is suspended. In addition, after full suspension the law still requires the driver to complete the program prior to getting his or her license reinstated. In Massachusetts, 96 percent of drivers comply and complete the program.^x

A 2016 study found that 88 percent of drivers who completed the Massachusetts NSC Attitudinal Dynamics of Driving program did not receive another surchargeable offense for 36 months after completing the program. Results provide convincing evidence that the decrease in violations continued to improve during the three-year post-training period. The study has been submitted as part of this testimony.

The Attitudinal Dynamics of Driving course, part of the NSC Defensive Driving curriculum, is built upon the psychology of Choice Theory, which helps drivers understand that because traffic violations are a result of their own actions and choices, it is up to them to change their behavior.^{xi}

The intention of S.B. 925 is to implement such a program in Connecticut. Requiring a mandatory driver retraining component like the NSC Attitudinal Dynamics of Driving, improves driving skills of chronic offenders and reduces their rates of recidivism. Better drivers lead to safer roads for all roadway users.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I am happy to answer any questions. For further information contact Tara Leystra Ackerman at tara.levystra@nsc.org or 202-602-1020.



ⁱ National Safety Council Motor Vehicle 2018 Fatality Estimates: <https://injuryfacts.nsc.org/motor-vehicle/overview/preliminary-estimates/data-details/>

ⁱⁱ National Center for State Courts – 2017 Trends in State Courts: Fines Fees, and Bail Practices: Challenges and Opportunities: <https://www.ncsc.org/~media/Microsites/Files/Trends%202017/Trends-2017-Final-small.ashx>

ⁱⁱⁱ Not all people lose their license due to poor driving behavior, and this statistic accounts for those non-traffic safety related revocations as well

^{iv} American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators 2013 Best Practices Guide to Reducing Suspended Drivers: <https://www.aamva.org/WorkArea/linkit.aspx?LinkIdentifier=id&ItemID=3723&libID=3709>

^v National Center for State Courts – 2017 Trends in State Courts: Fines Fees, and Bail Practices: Challenges and Opportunities: <https://www.ncsc.org/~media/Microsites/Files/Trends%202017/Trends-2017-Final-small.ashx>

^{vi} American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators Reducing Suspended Drivers and Alternative Reinstatement Best Practices 2018: <https://www.aamva.org/ReducingSuspendedDriversAternativeReinstatementBP/>

^{vii} National Highway Traffic Safety Administration Report: Reasons for Driver License Suspension, Recidivism, and Crash Involvement Among Drivers with Suspended/Revoked Licenses: https://www.nhtsa.gov/sites/nhtsa.dot.gov/files/documents/811092_driver-license.pdf.

^{viii} American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators Reducing Suspended Drivers and Alternative Reinstatement Best Practices 2018: <https://www.aamva.org/ReducingSuspendedDriversAternativeReinstatementBP/>

^{ix} The Merit Rating Board (MRB) maintains Massachusetts driving records consisting of traffic law violations and at-fault insurance claim records. Out-of-state traffic law violations and at-fault accidents are also reported to the MRB. All of these incidents are called surchargeable incidents.

^x NSC internal data indicates 96 percent compliance over time for all drivers registered for driver re-training including drivers that registered after their license was suspended.

^{xi} National Safety Council DDC Attitudinal Dynamics of Driving:

<https://www.nsc.org/Portals/0/Documents/DDCCorporateDocuments/Sell-Sheets/2019/attitudinal-dynamics-ss.pdf?ver=2019-01-03-150355-897>.