

Testimony of:

Allen R. Robinson, Ph.D.
CEO
American Driver and Traffic Safety Education Association
Indiana University of Pennsylvania
Indiana, PA 15705-1087
(724) 357-4051
(724) 357-7595 (FAX)
1-800-896-7703
E-mail: arobin@grove.iup.edu

To:

House Transportation Committee
April 7, 1998

Chairman Geist, Representative Vance and members of the House Transportation Committee, I commend you for conducting this public hearing on Graduated Driver Licensing.

My name is Allen Robinson, CEO of The American Driver and Traffic Safety Education Association and a professor at the Highway Safety Center, IUP. The Highway Safety Center, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, under contract to ADTSEA, provides management services to the Association. The Highway Safety Center is also contracted by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, to provide a national driver education expert to assist states in initiating two-stage driver education programs and to support state efforts to implement graduated driver licensing.

The American Driver and Traffic Safety Education Association (ADTSEA) is the professional association which represents traffic safety educators throughout the United States. ADTSEA serves as a national advocate for quality traffic safety education. It creates and publishes policies and guidelines for the discipline. ADTSEA conducts conferences, workshops and seminars and provides consulting services.

In addition to my comments today, I have copies of a State Legislative Fact Sheet from NHTSA and an article from the Washington Post concerning Maryland's new Graduated Driver Licensing Legislation.

I. Highway Traffic Safety is a serious social and economical problem

a. Congestion

- Millions of hours (work-leisure) lost annually

b. Crashes

- More than 11,500,000 reported annually

c. Drivers In Crashes

- Approximately 23,000,000 annually

d. Financial Loss

- About \$200,000,000,000 annually

e. Injuries

- Over 3,000,000 annually

f. Fatalities

- Approximately 44,000 annually

II. A Concept of the Driving Task

- a. Driving is not just a physical task; rather it is primarily a mental and social task.
- b. Driving an automobile consists of making skilled and properly timed actions, under varying road and traffic conditions, based on sound judgments and decisions: these decisions are, in turn, dependent upon previously acquired knowledge and the gathering of accurate information pertinent to the immediate traffic situation.

III. NHTSA Report to Congress

- a. Recommends the development of a cost-effective two-stage driver education program that is an integral part of a graduated licensing system.
- b. The first driver education stage would provide basic vehicle handling skills.

- c. The second stage would provide for other safe driving skills, including enhanced decision making to reduce risk taking of young drivers.
- d. The two-stage driver education program includes developing procedures that would extend the role of parents and other adults in the process of educating and training novice drivers.

IV. Why do we need Graduated Licensing?

- a. Young people, age 15-20, continue to be overrepresented in motor vehicle crashes
 - 1. Inexperience: novice drivers lack the adequate skills needed to safely operate a vehicle.
 - 2. High risk-taking behavior: characteristics of young drivers include being immature and impulsive which results in poor driving judgement and participation in high-risk behaviors such as speeding and driving too fast for road conditions.

3. High-risk exposure: novice drivers drive during nighttime with young passengers in the vehicle. Having passengers in the vehicle can cause distractions and peer pressure to participate in inappropriate behaviors.

V. What are the outcomes of Graduated Licensing?

- a. Reduces exposure to high risk and nighttime driving
- b. Motivates by requiring a crash and violation-free record before regular licensing
- c. Educates young drivers through a two-stage driver education program

VI. Driver Education

- a. While a novice driver is devoting attention to keeping the vehicle on the road, it is very difficult for them to absorb safety information.
- b. Thus, safe driver education should be taught after the novice has learned the basic vehicle control systems.

- c. The requirements of a graduated licensing system allow the novice driver to gain basic vehicle skills under supervised conditions.

- d. By providing safety information after the basic control skills are learned, novice drivers may be more receptive to the information as they can better relate the information to driving situations they have experienced.