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Introduction

Good afternoon, Chairman Markosek. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony to the House Transportation Committee in favor of HB 1006, a bill requiring interlocks for all convicted drunk drivers.

Campaign to Eliminate Drunk Driving

In 2006, Mothers against Drunk Driving launched the Campaign to Eliminate Drunk Driving. The Campaign is comprised of four prongs, each of which is geared at eliminating drunk driving. These prongs include:

- Support for high visibility law enforcement,
- Mandatory ignition interlock use for all persons **convicted of DUI**
- Support of advanced technologies, and;
- Grassroots support for these efforts.

MADD strongly supports HB 1006 which represents the second prong of Med's national Campaign to Eliminate Drunk Driving. MADD believes that anyone who violates the public trust and drives drunk has earned the right for an alcohol ignition interlock device to be installed on their vehicle. The fact is lengthy hard license suspensions do not work. Offenders who lose their license continue to drink and drive because they can. HB 1006 requires that all persons convicted of DUI drive with an electronic probation officer, known as an ignition interlock device.

Presently, nine other states: New Mexico, Arizona, Louisiana, Illinois, Washington, Nebraska, Colorado, Alaska, and Utah have enacted laws promoting interlock usage by all DUI convicted offenders. MADD hopes Pennsylvania can be added to this list of states committed to eliminating drunk driving.

The Need for Ignition Interlocks

Pennsylvania needs mandatory interlock legislation. In 2007, according to the Department of Justice, Pennsylvania had over 54,000 DUI arrests. This same year the National Highway and Transportation Safety Administration reported that 33.5 percent of Pennsylvania's highway traffic fatalities involved drunk drivers, and 500 people lost their lives to drunk drivers on Pennsylvania's roads.

To operate a vehicle equipped with an ignition interlock device, the DUI convicted offender must blow into a device the size of a cell phone attached to their vehicle's ignition. The vehicle won't start if the offender registers a BAC in excess of the limit at which the device is set. A sober offender can pick up their children from school, run errands, and continue to provide financially for their family. He or she can do everything you and I can do. He or she simply cannot drive after drinking and hurt your family or mine.

HB 1006 requires all convicted DUI offenders to drive with an interlock because the most conservative peer-reviewed scientific studies confirm a first DUI conviction constitutes on average the eighty-seventh time a first-convicted DUI offender has driven with an illegal blood alcohol concentration.¹ Presently, only a little over 4,000 DUI offenders in Pennsylvania are using ignition interlock devices.² Pennsylvania's current interlock law is discretionary; judges have discretion in deciding whether an offender uses an interlock.

Multiple studies on interlocks for both first-time convicted and repeat offenders show decreases in DUI recidivism of up to 64 percent while the interlock is installed on a vehicle. For example, New Mexico, even before launching its new, more extensive first-convicted interlock program, found a decrease in recidivism by over 50 percent among first-convicted offenders who installed interlock devices.³ New Mexico, which once had some of the worst DUI crash and fatality numbers in the country, has experienced a 35 percent decline in alcohol-involved fatalities since beginning its mandatory ignition interlock program in 2002 and enhancing it to cover all offenders in 2005.⁴

Benefits of the Law

The benefits of ignition interlocks far exceed the costs. Interlock costs are offender-borne. A convicted offender will pay a one-time installation fee ranging from \$70-\$100; they will pay monthly maintenance fees that range from \$60-\$75. These costs average out to less than the cost of an alcoholic drink per day. The interlock installation cost, maintenance fee, and administrative fee pale in comparison to the \$114.3 billion per year the United States spends on drunk driving.

The monthly fee is required for leasing the equipment. In addition, the equipment must be checked periodically to ensure that it is properly calibrated. The ignition interlock provider is able to monitor the offender to oversee progress. Records are kept by the device on number of starts and attempted starts. We do not want someone who has tried to drive drunk each day for six months to get his license back. The ignition interlock device requires the offender to earn the right to regain driving privileges.

¹ Voas, Robert, Paul Marques, and Richard Roth. "Evidence that Interlocks Are Effective with First Offenders. 6th Annual Ignition Interlock Symposium, 2005.

<http://www.tirf.ca/whatNew/newsItemPDFs/Bob_Voas.pdf>

² Roth, Richard, PhD., "Estimates of Currently Installed Interlocks in the US," September 5, 2008.

³ See Richard Roth, PhD. study on Recidivism of First Offenders by Year, June 20, 2008.

⁴ See Richard, Roth, Ph.D. "Interlocks up, Drunk Driving Down," October 12. 2008.

The Truth about Ignition Interlocks

MADD believes convicted drunk drivers have earned the right to use ignition interlocks. MADD does not believe in requiring ignition interlocks for persons without a DUI conviction. If you leave a bar after having one drink, not only will you not reach a .08, you will not have a DUI conviction necessitating use of an ignition interlock. The alcohol industry adamantly opposes ignition interlocks and will say that those individuals who drink responsibly, who offer a champagne toast at a wedding or consume a beer at a baseball game, will have to use an ignition interlock device. While MADD believes that no one should drink and drive, the truth is that someone who has a champagne toast or a beer at a ball game will not have an illegal BAC. The truth is it takes several drinks, for a person of any gender or size, to reach a BAC of .08.

Conclusion:

I appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony to the Transportation Committee recognizing the benefits of enacting HB 1006. Passing mandatory ignition interlock laws that require all persons convicted of DUI to use ignition interlocks is Med's highest legislative priority. On behalf of MADD Pennsylvania and its many dedicated staff and volunteers, but more importantly, on behalf of all victims and survivors of drunk driving, I ask that you vote in favor of HB 1006 and advance this legislation to the floor so it can be enacted into law.