

February 15, 2018

The Honorable John Carson
Georgia House of Representatives
607-A Coverdell Legislative Office Building
Atlanta, GA 30334

Re: American Medical Association support for House Bill 673

Dear Representative Carson:

On behalf of the American Medical Association (AMA) and our physician and medical student members, I am writing to express our support for House Bill (H.B.) 673, legislation that will reduce death and injury caused by distracted driving.

Distracted driving has become a serious public health concern. According to estimates from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, distracted driving is associated with nine deaths and over 1,000 injuries each day.¹ In 2015, 3,477 people were killed and an estimated additional 391,000 injured in distraction-related motor vehicle crashes.² Distracted driving is especially dangerous for young drivers and is responsible for more than 58 percent of motor vehicle crashes involving teen drivers.³

Use of handheld wireless communication devices, such as talking on a mobile phone or texting, is a leading source of distraction for drivers of all ages. There is clear evidence that talking on or using a device diverts a driver's attention and reduces the ability to react. H.B. 673 rightly prohibits these dangerous activities. This legislation represents an opportunity to improve roadway safety for all drivers, passengers, and pedestrians and reduce injuries and death related to motor vehicle crashes.

Research has demonstrated the effectiveness of similar laws prohibiting use of handheld devices while driving. The National Safety Council reports that fatalities decreased from 11.8 deaths per 100,000 to 7.3 per 100,000 in states with handheld device bans. California's experience may also be instructive. A recent analysis showed that distracted driving was reduced by half following enactment of legislation prohibiting drivers from holding devices in 2017.⁴

¹ National Center for Statistics and Analysis, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Distracted Driving: 2015, Traffic Safety Research Notes DOT HS 812 381 (Mar. 2017)

² National Center for Statistics and Analysis, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Driver Electronic Device Use in 2015, Summary of Statistical Findings DOT HS 812 326 (Sep. 2016)

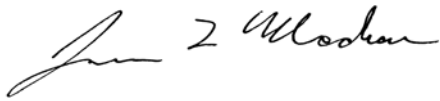
³ AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, Using Naturalistic Driving Data to Assess the Prevalence of Environmental Factors and Driver Behaviors in Teen Driver Crashes (Mar. 2015)

⁴ California Office of Traffic Safety, Observational Study of Handheld Cellphone and Texting Use Among California Drivers 2017, Summary Report (Oct. 2017)

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We applaud the Georgia House of Representatives for considering this important public health measure to reduce the traffic-related death and injury. We urge passage of H.B. 673 and thank you for your consideration of our views. If you need further information, please contact Annalia Michelman, JD, Senior Legislative Attorney, Advocacy Resource Center, at annalia.michelman@ama-assn.org, or (312) 464-4788.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James L. Madara". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

James L. Madara, MD

cc: Medical Association of Georgia
Patrice A. Harris, MD, MA