



PETER COURTNEY
President of the Senate

Senate Committee on Judiciary

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*TESTIMONY BY SENATOR PETER COURTNEY
LC 1105
DECEMBER 14, 2016*

Chair Prozanski, Chair Barker, members of the Senate and House Committees on Judiciary, thank you for hearing my testimony today.

My name is Peter Courtney. I am a State Senator. I live in NE Salem.

I am here to testify in support of LC1105.

In Oregon, My Oregon:

- A distracted driving crash occurs every 2.5 hours;
- A person is injured in a distracted driving crash every 3 hours;
- A distracted driver crash involving a cell phone occurs more than 5 times a week;
- Almost 5 people are injured each week involving a distracted driver crash involving a cell phone; and
- Almost 1,500 people a month are convicted of using a cell phone while driving.

Nearly 1,600 Oregonians participated in a 2016 survey of distracted driving behaviors and the following results were found:

- 84 percent feel uncomfortable with a driver who is distracted;
- 44 percent admitted to driving distracted with passengers; and
- 75 percent admitted to driving distracted alone.

LC 1105 makes penalties for using a mobile communications device while driving the same as penalties for driving under the influence:

- One year in prison or \$6250 fine, or both
- Increases to 5 years in prison and \$125,000 fine for multiple violations within 10 years

Let me tell you why I believe that is necessary.

Between 2005 and 2012, the number of drunk driving fatalities per person decreased by 28 percent. Yet, even as the drunk driving fatality rate continues its decades-long decline, the danger of *distracted* driving is worsening as smartphone usage increases.

The number of fatalities caused by distracted driving increased 28 percent between 2005 and 2008 alone.

According to a National Highway Traffic Safety Administration study, drivers under 25 are three times more likely as older drivers to text while driving. Young people are less likely to consider texting and driving to be unsafe: 60 percent of 18-20 year olds reported sending texts while driving to be “very unsafe,” compared to 95percent for those over 45.

Even though most states outlaw texting while driving, the associated fines are usually far lower than those for drinking and driving, even though several studies show they can be equally as dangerous.

Around 20 percent of high school students said they have ridden with a drunk driver, while a full half of all adults and teenagers said that they have ridden in a car while the driver was texting. Even though distracted driving can be as dangerous as drunk driving, 44 percent of adults said they had been in a car when the driver “used the cell phone in a way that put themselves or others in danger.”

Distracted driving related injuries and deaths are becoming an epidemic. Until we, as a state, take distracted driving as seriously as drunk driving we aren't going to be able to change behavior.