Statement before the Maryland Senate Committee on Judicial Proceedings on Senate Bill 265

Passenger and Nighttime Restrictions for Young Drivers

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The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety is a nonprofit research and communications organization that identifies ways to reduce the deaths, injuries, and property damage on our nation's highways. We are supported by the nation's automobile insurers. I am submitting for the record research on crash risks when young drivers transport other teenage passengers and when they drive at night.

Driving with passengers

Most teenagers who are fatally injured are drivers, but many teens also die as passengers. In Maryland, 39 percent of the motor vehicle deaths of 16-19 year-olds during 1998-2007 were passengers. Among 16 year-olds, the split was close to 50-50 (51 percent drivers, 49 percent passengers) (Table 1). In addition, 76 percent of the 16-year-old passengers killed were in vehicles driven by teenage drivers (Table 2).

Table 1
Number of fatally injured passenger vehicle drivers and passengers in Maryland, 1998-2007

Age	Drivers	Passengers
16	62	59
17	103	59
18	91	64
19	97	48
Total	353	230

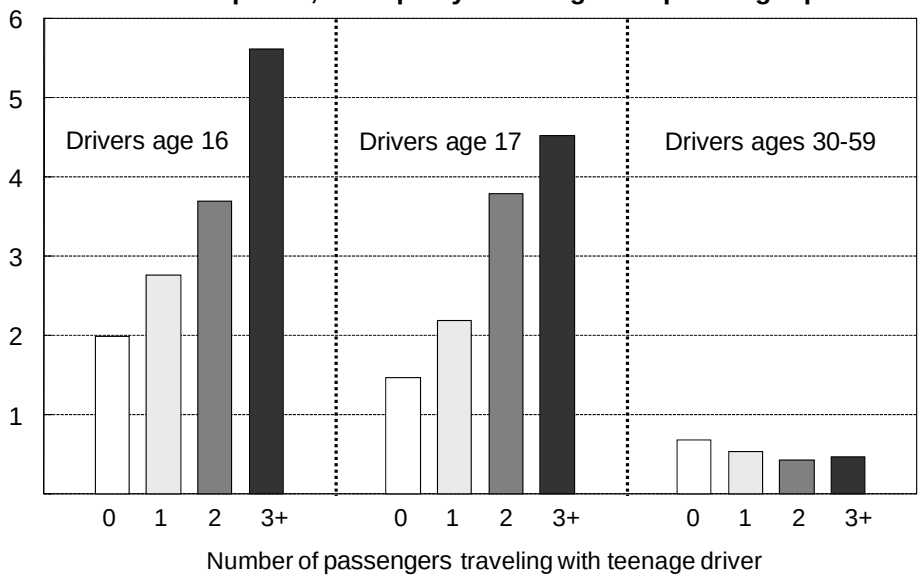
Table 2
Percentage of teenage passengers fatally injured in vehicles driven by teenage drivers (ages 16-19) in Maryland, 1998-2007

Age	Number of passengers	Percentage of passengers killed
16	59	76%
17	59	73%
18	64	59%
19	48	48%

A major risk factor for teenage drivers is passenger presence, especially teenage passengers. For older drivers, passenger presence either has no effect on crash risk or decreases it; but for young drivers, passengers greatly magnify the risk. That is, teenagers' already high fatal crash risk when driving alone increases dramatically when passengers are added (Figure 1).[1]

The reasons are obvious. Teenage passengers create distractions for drivers who are inexperienced to start with and who need to be paying full attention to the driving task. Plus the presence of peers in the vehicle often induces young drivers to take risks.

Figure 1
Fatal crash rates per 10,000 trips by driver age and passenger presence



Passenger restrictions can involve some inconvenience for parents. Still, Insurance Institute for Highway Safety surveys of parents show strong support for graduated licensing in states where it has been adopted and for passenger restrictions where they are in effect.[2-3]

Because of risks that teenage passengers pose for young drivers, Maryland and 39 other states have introduced passenger limitations as part of their graduated licensing systems. Research conducted in California shows that restrictions on carrying passengers are working:

- 14 percent reduction in the proportion of fatal/injury crashes among 16-17-year-old drivers with passengers younger than 20.[4]
- 36 percent reduction in the number of 16-year-old drivers who were carrying exclusively passengers 20 or younger.[5]
- 25 percent reduction in the average number of teenage passengers in fatal/injury crashes with 16-year-old drivers.[6]

Extending the duration of the teenage passenger restriction from 5 months to 1 year will further strengthen Maryland's law.

Night driving restrictions

Driving at night is a high-risk activity for people of all ages, especially the very youngest drivers. This is why night driving restrictions are included in graduated licensing laws in Maryland and 45 other states. We know these restrictions work based on studies in several states that curtailed

young people's night driving since at least the 1960s. For example, New York's restriction (9 pm to 5 am) was established before 1970, and Pennsylvania's (midnight to 5 am) took effect sometime before 1977.[7] Likewise, Maryland implemented its nighttime driving restriction in 1979.

To the extent that restrictions cut down on driving at night, they reduce crashes. And the reductions are dramatic — a 62 percent crash reduction during restricted hours in New York, according to a 1984 study, and a 69 percent reduction in Pennsylvania.[8] Although the percentage reduction in New York is smaller, the total number of crashes averted is much greater than in Pennsylvania because New York's restriction covers the 9 pm to midnight hours, a time when many crashes involving young drivers occur. The same study found no evidence of spillover effects to unrestricted hours. Nor were there offsetting increases in injuries to 16-year-old passengers, pedalcyclists, or pedestrians during restricted hours.[8]

Research shows that nighttime restrictions enacted in graduated licensing laws are working:

- Florida – 17 percent reduction in fatal/injury crashes among 16-year-olds.[9]
- Michigan – 59 percent reduction in crashes among 16-year-olds.[10]
- North Carolina – 43 percent reduction in crashes among 16-year-olds.[11]
- Nova Scotia – 45-60 percent reduction in crashes among 16-17-year-olds.[12]
- California – 9 percent reduction in the proportion of fatal/injury crashes among 16-17-year-old drivers occurring during restricted hours.[4]

It is important to recognize that these restrictions do not ban all driving at night. Driving under adult supervision is allowed, and all states allow unsupervised driving at night that is considered essential. Maryland allows, among other things, young drivers to use their vehicles for employment-related driving and for school-related activities. The idea is to restrict high-risk recreational driving without hindering young people's engagement in purposeful activities.

In Maryland during 1995-2005, 3,400 police-reported crashes involving 16- and 17-year-old drivers occurred between 11 pm and midnight. Thus an average of more than 300 crashes each year occurred during this time period (Table 3). These crashes could be reduced by starting the

Table 3
16-17-year-old drivers involved in police-reported crashes in Maryland, 1995-2005

Time	Total	Yearly average
11:00 – 11:59 pm	3,400	309
10:00 – 10:59 pm	3,938	358
9:00 – 9:59 pm	4,651	423

nighttime driving restriction at 11 pm rather than midnight. Twenty-one other states already have a nighttime driving restriction beginning at 11 pm or earlier and it makes sense for Maryland to make the same change (Table 4).

Table 4
21 states with nighttime driving restrictions starting at 11 pm or earlier

Start time	State
11 pm	California, Connecticut, Florida, Hawaii, Indiana (Sun-Thu), Louisiana, Montana, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, West Virginia, Wyoming
10 pm	Delaware, Nevada, Mississippi, South Dakota, Illinois (Sun-Thu)
9 pm	New York, North Carolina
8 pm	—
7 pm	—
6 pm	South Carolina (EST)
Sunset	Idaho

Conclusion

Maryland has been a pioneer in implementing laws to reduce crashes and injuries among young drivers. To reduce the frequency of crashes involving young drivers, Maryland currently restricts the number of passengers carried by those drivers and limits the nighttime driving by those drivers. Research by the University of Maryland School of Medicine shows that Maryland's graduated driver licensing law has reduced crashes and nonfatal injuries among 16-year-old drivers.[13] Increasing the duration of the passenger restrictions from 5 months to 1 year and changing the start time of the nighttime restriction from midnight to 11 pm will strengthen Maryland's law.

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