

May 12, 2005

The Hon. Christopher Dodd
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Hon. John Warner
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senators,

Our organizations write to express strong support for the Dodd/Warner amendment to H.R. 3, the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act of 2005, as a reasonable measure to protect the lives of young drivers and their passengers. All too often, inexperienced young drivers who are just starting to drive are given too much responsibility, too soon. Unfortunately, the result in too many cases is a crash with serious or fatal results. In 2004 alone, there were 8,566 deaths in crashes involving young drivers 16-20 years of age according to government data. Of that total, nearly 3,600 young drivers died and another 2,300 people killed in these crashes were passengers in the vehicles with the young drivers. Those numbers will be repeated over and over in the next 5 years unless more states adopt stronger teen driving laws, during the authorization period of HR 3, a total of nearly 43,000 deaths will occur in crashes involving young drivers, among them 18,000 young drivers and 11,500 of their passengers. The adoption of the Dodd/Warner teen driving safety amendment is needed to address the human toll – the loss of our children – as well as the financial costs associated with these crashes.

Our organizations support the amendment because it encourages states to adopt Graduated Driver License (GDL) laws for young, novice drivers. GDL laws have been proven effective in states that already have adopted such laws. Your amendment would increase the number of states and the percentage of new young drivers who are covered by the safety protection of GDL laws. We also support the reasonable minimum requirements for GDL laws that are included in the amendment. These include recommendations by the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) and other safety experts and organizations. These modest requirements, such as a 3-stage GDL program, a restriction on nighttime driving during the most dangerous hours for teen drivers, and a limit on the number of young passengers that can ride in the vehicle are essential strategies to save the lives of teen drivers and their passengers. Further, the amendment will not withhold any federal funds from states that choose not to enact a GDL law.

Because the Dodd/Warner amendment will protect our teens as they learn to drive, as well as others who share the road with them, we fully support your efforts and the amendment. Millions of young lives are at stake.

Sincerely,

Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety
Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers
Consumer Federation of America
National Safety Council
Public Citizen
Trauma Foundation

Allstate Insurance Company
Automotive Coalition for Traffic Safety
Kids and Cars
Nationwide Mutual Insurance Company
State Farm Insurance Companies
USAA