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Testimony in Support of Assembly Bill 629

Assembly Committee on Transportation

February 6, 2024

Madame Chair and members of the committee, thank you for holding a public hearing on Assembly Bill (AB) 629. I apologize for not being able to attend in-person today.

Performing a job in a highway work zone is an incredibly dangerous job, as anyone who has done so will tell you. Currently, under state statutes, we do not require that student drivers be instructed how to drive in work zones. However, we do require other relevant items be taught, including material related to motorcycle awareness, railroad crossings, stopped emergency vehicles, etc.

AB 629 is a very simple, common-sense piece of legislation. The intent is to bring awareness to work zone safety hazards early on in a driver's experience and, thus, help to protect the workers in the work zones. This bill will require that students spend 30 minutes becoming acquainted with highway work zone hazards.

Thank you again for this opportunity to submit written testimony in support of AB 629. The proposal has received bipartisan support so far, being unanimously recommended for passage by the Senate Committee on Transportation and Local Government, then passing the full Senate on a voice vote. I look forward to seeing it move forward in the legislative process with the same support. Though I could not attend today, please do not hesitate to reach out to my office with any questions.



PATRICK TESTIN

STATE SENATOR

DATE: February 6, 2024
RE: **Testimony on Assembly Bill 629**
TO: The Assembly Committee on Transportation
FROM: Senator Patrick Testin

Thank you Chair VanderMeer and committee members for hearing my testimony on Assembly Bill (AB) 629 today. I'll keep my comments about AB 629 very brief.

Within state statues are requirements that students spend 30 minutes becoming "acquainted" with certain vehicle operations related requirements, such as:

- hazards related to farm equipment
- organ and tissue donation
- stopped emergency vehicles
- railroad crossings
- text messaging
- motorcycle awareness

However, there is no requirement to include education on work zone safety hazards in the state's driver's education curriculum. In an effort in increase awareness of work zone safety hazards, we are introducing legislation to add, 30 minutes of highway work zone safety instruction to the state's drivers education curriculum.

Thank you and I hope that I can count on your support for AB 629.

WCHA Chairperson:
Marv Thompson, Barron County

WCHA Vice-Chair:
Matthew Budde, Calumet County

WCHA Past Chairman:
Tim Kessler, Washburn County

WCHA Treasurer:
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WCHA President:
Roland Hawk, P.E., Wood County

WCHA Secretary:
Robbie Krejci, P.E., St. Croix County

WCHA Past President:
Jon Johnson, Eau Claire County

WCHA Executive Director:
Patrick B. Vander Sanden



February 6, 2024

TO: Members, Assembly Committee on Transportation
FR: Patrick Vander Sanden, Executive Director

RE: 2023 Assembly Bill 629

Representatives,

The Wisconsin County Highway Association (WCHA) fully endorses 2023 Assembly Bill 629, which would be a vital first step to toward increasing safety within road work zone construction work sites and in creating a safer traveling environment on all Wisconsin roadways, but requiring a minimum of 30 minutes of instruction related to work zone driving to the overall driver's education curriculum.

Distracted drivers are a hazard wherever they may be traveling, but things intensify when the distractions occur within a work zone. Road project work requires focus and care by the crews who work in them, and it often takes place in tight spaces, and extreme conditions. The trust placed in motorists who travel through work zones is high, but when the focus and care is not shown by those motorists, disastrous consequences can result.

According to WisDOT, between 2018-2022 we've seen 63 deaths and more than 4,300 injuries in Wisconsin work zones. As disturbing as that may be, the trend can be reversed with efforts to protect our road crews through action. Distracted driving is the culprit in many of these incidents, with cell phone use while driving as the most common distraction. If the moment a driver pulls their eyes off the road to address a text or phone call results in adding to these troublesome statistics, any effort that trains our drivers to avoid that temptation is well worth it.

WCHA appreciates and thanks Representative Calvin Callahan's introduction of this bill. Imparting awareness by those at the outset of their driving experience, will serve to have new drivers more ready to recognize and take needed precautions while driving through work zones. To ensure that every newly licensed driver is trained to be aware of and respect our work zones will be a great step toward turning the discouraging trend related to work zone incidents all-around.

Your consideration and support of Assembly Bill 629 is very much appreciated.

Thank you.

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