

**Position Paper**  
**HB 2033 – (NOW: Teenage Driver Safety Act)**

**Issue**

Recognizing that new teenage drivers as a population are among the poorest drivers, both in terms of statistics and by reputation, Arizona would benefit from the adoption of tested and proven intermediate licensing steps for new teen drivers. The legislation seeks to improve the driving experience of new teenage drivers by establishing reasonable, responsible and effective requirements for supervision, nighttime driving and passenger limitations for the first six months after being issued an intermediate drivers license (class G license).

**Quick Facts**

- Teen drivers represent less than 7% of the driving population, but account for more than 13% of drivers involved in all deadly crashes. (NTSB – *Safety Alert*)
- 16-year-old drivers are more than twice as likely to be involved in fatal crashes as older drivers. (NTSB – *Safety Alert*)
- In the United States, 63.5% of the people killed in teen-driver crashes are people other than the teen driver; in Arizona, the number increases to 74.5%. (AAA – *Teen crashes – Everyone is at risk*)
- Compared with experienced drivers, the novice adolescent driver is less proficient in detecting and responding to hazards and controlling the vehicle. (Official Journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics)
- Arizona is 1 of only 5 states that does not provide either nighttime driving restrictions or passenger limitations for new teenage drivers. All of Arizona's surrounding states - California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, and Utah - have both. (AAA Summary of GDL Laws; Insurance Institute for Highway Safety – *U.S. Licensing Systems for Young Drivers*)
- Studies of intermediate driving programs in individual states have reported reduction in *fatal* crash rates of novice drivers that ranged from 11% to 32%. (John Hopkins School of Public Affairs and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration -- *National Evaluation of Graduated Driver Licensing Programs*)
- The crash risks for teenage drivers increases exponentially with each additional passenger in a vehicle with a teenage driver. With 3 or more passengers, the crash risk for teenage drivers is about 4 times greater than when driving alone. (*Journal of Safety Research* – "Teenage drivers: patterns of risk")
- States with nighttime driving restrictions show crash reductions of up to 60 percent during restricted hours. (National Highway Traffic Safety Administration – *Traffic Safety Facts: Laws*)

**Background**

Motor Vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for teenagers in Arizona and nationwide. Not drugs. Not alcohol. Not violence. Car crashes. And by all recognized standards, Arizona's training requirements for teenage drivers are among the weakest and least effective in the nation.

Arizona recently received the lowest score in the Emergency Nurses Association's 2006 National Scorecard on State Highway Laws, which included teenage driver safety laws. In addition, the Arizona Child Fatality Review Program found in its November 2006 report that more than one-third of the deaths of teenagers (ages 15 to 17 years of age) were the result of motor vehicle crashes and that motor vehicles crashes continued to account for the highest number of preventable deaths of children in Arizona.

(over)

**Teenage Driver Safety Act Coalition**



**FARMERS**



*Arizona Chapter*



Arizona State Council



Across the country, driver license programs for beginning teenage drivers generally have three phases, consisting of a learner's permit, an intermediate license and a full license. The intermediate license phase can consist of nighttime restrictions and passenger limitations.

Arizona is 1 of only 5 states that do not provide either nighttime driving restrictions or passenger limitations for new teenage drivers. In fact, summaries of state laws by AAA and the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety found that among the 45 states that have enacted intermediate driver license programs, all of Arizona's surrounding states (California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, and Utah) have both.

States that have enacted comprehensive teenage driver laws are saving lives. Across the country, programs for new teenage drivers have seen reductions of 18 to 21 percent in fatal crash rates of 16-year-old drivers. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), states with nighttime driving restrictions show crash reductions of up to 60 percent during the restricted hours.

And teenage drivers are not just hurting themselves – they are hurting others. NHTSA also found the majority of fatalities in teen crashes are individuals other than the teen driver. A 2006 AAA study demonstrated that 63.5% of fatalities were passengers of the teen driver, occupants of other vehicles or non-motorists, not the teen driver. And, in Arizona, that number increases to 74.5%.

Arizonans want increased requirements for new teenage drivers. AAA Arizona commissioned a study, conducted by Behavior Research Center, to measure the attitudes of Arizona residents toward new teenaged drivers. 78 percent of the residents said that driving habits of new teenage drivers are "only fair" or "poor." The study also found that 81% of Arizonans favor restricting new teen drivers from driving between midnight and 5:00 a.m., except for religious, school or employment purposes. In addition, almost 2/3 of respondents favor a ban on teen drivers having any other teens in the car, except for immediate family members.

## Provisions

Increases the instruction permit time period so that a permit may be issued to an individual who is 15 years and six months old, up from 15 years and seven months old.

Increases the hours of supervised training necessary to obtain a driver license from 25 hours to 30 hours, of which six must be during nighttime driving conditions.

Requires an instruction permittee to be accompanied by a licensed individual who is at least 21 years of age.

Establishes nighttime driving restrictions (midnight to 5:00 a.m.) for the first 6 months that a 16- or 17-year-old holds a class G license and provides exemptions to the restrictions for employment, sanctioned religious or school activities, or for family emergencies.

Limits the number of non-family, teenage passengers in the vehicle to no more than one passenger for the first six months that a 16- or 17-year-old holds a class G license. No restrictions on the number of siblings allowed in the vehicle.

Establishes graduated monetary penalties and extensions of the nighttime restrictions and passenger limitations for non-compliance of the restrictions and limitations.

## Position

The coalition supports the establishment of effective requirements for teenage drivers to improve their driving capabilities and experience on the road during the critical first months of their driving careers.

