

Thank you Madam/Mr. Chair and members of the committee for allowing me to speak today.

My name is _____ and I am here on behalf of the Michigan Society To Oppose In-transit Texting or STOP IT. We are an organization dedicated to ensuring safety on Michigan roads by outlawing texting while driving, or as we like to call it, Driving while intoxicated.

I am here to speak in support of Senate Bill 402, which strengthens penalties for drivers who are ticketed for distracted driving. Let me start my testimony with:

A brief history of texting:

The first text message was sent in 1992 and read "Merry Christmas." It was sent from a desktop computer.

Short Message Service
Nokia was the first handset manufacturer whose total GSM phone line in 1993 supported user-sending of SMS text messages. In 1997, it became the first manufacturer to produce a mobile phone with a full keyboard: the Nokia 9000i Communicator.

Texting was slow to take off. In 1995, the average person sent less than 0.4 texts per month. By 2000, the average number of text messages in the United States increased to 35 a month per person.

In 2007, Americans for the first time sent and received more text messages per month than phone calls.

In 2015, teen girls sent an average of 40 texts per day. Older females sent an average of 50 per day.

Texting while driving/distracted driving

Mark Twain said there are three kinds of lies: Lies, damned lies and statistics. Regardless, here are some very sobering statistics, according to Huffington Post:

In 2014, **3,179 people were killed and 431,000 injured** in motor vehicle accidents caused by distracted drivers.

Eleven teens are killed every day from accidents involving texting while driving.

One in every four – **25 percent** – of all motor vehicle accidents involved cell phones.

Texting while driving is **six times** more likely to cause an accident than driving drunk.

Forty percent of teens say they have been a passenger in a car whose driver used a cellphone in a way that put them in danger.

Thirty-three U.S. drivers ages 18 to 64 reported reading or writing text messages while driving in the previous month. In comparison, **only 15 percent** of drivers from Spain reported texting while driving in the same period.

Michigan laws

How many here, in the past month, have snuck a peek at their phone while driving to read a text? Or to quickly key in a response? I have.

Michigan lawmakers have been working hard the past six years to **make our roads safer**, and part of that has involved **putting restrictions on the use of cell phones while behind the wheel**. However, it has not had enough of an impact on texting while driving.

As of July 1, 2010, Michigan law prohibits texting while driving. **For a first offense, motorists are fined \$100. Subsequent offenses cost \$200.** That's **not serving as a deterrent**. You can drive down any road in Lansing and see drivers checking their phones, staying at traffic lights long after they have turned green, or weaving into another lane while they use their phones.

This is **common-sense legislation that will save lives and prevent injury** as a result of distracted driving because of cell phone use. One provision Senate Bill 402 makes distracted driving a **secondary offense**. For example, if a police officer saw a driver texting, that driver could not be pulled over and issued a citation for that alone. If the driver had a cracked windshield, a non-operational brake light or was crossing the traffic line, the officer could make a traffic stop and issue tickets for both the primary and secondary offenses. Personally I think this is being too lenient on texters – with a **full one-quarter of accidents being attributed to distracted driving, we are nearing epidemic levels**.

There was a time in the 1930s that people predicted putting radios in cars would be so distracting that drivers would be careening off roads and colliding with other vehicles. Technology has advanced to make use of a radio while driving less distracting, with pre-set channels and search tools. Perhaps technology will advance to the point where Siri or Android Assistant can read texts sent to drivers and transcribe their voice message to texts in a less clunky manner than currently exists. Until then, texting should be reserved for passengers only. It's not worth a text to ruin the lives of drivers, passengers and innocent bystanders.

Thank you for your time and I am happy to answer any questions you might have.
Michigan Society to oppose texting in transit