



Oregon

Tina Kotek, Governor

Governor's Advisory Committee on DUII

Transportation Safety Office

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DATE: March 17, 2023
TO: Joint Committee on Transportation
FROM: Governor's Advisory Committee on DUII
SUBJECT: HB3374

Dear Co-Chairs Gorsek and McLain and members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to express support of HB3374 from the Governor's Advisory Committee (GAC) on DUII.

In the United States there are over 30,000 deaths annually because of traffic crashes. Many of us have become accustomed to hearing about a traffic "accident," and since it is described as an "accident" there is a sense that nothing can be done about the problem or the causation of the incident.

The GAC on DUII has a goal, along with many other groups and organizations to reduce the number of impaired driving related and other crashes on our roadways. Unfortunately, data from the Oregon Department of Transportation (DOT) indicates that between 2014 and 2020, fatal and serious injury crashes were continually on the rise in Oregon, with an average annual increase of 88 crashes per year. While 2021 data is still preliminary, fatal, and serious injury crashes increased sharply representing a 70% increase overall.

Oregon is not the only state experiencing such increases. Many states are taking various steps to address this alarming trend. One is in trying to change the mindset of the public, media, and others that these incidents are not always an "accident," and instead are something that could be prevented.

We believe that words matter. Properly identifying an issue allows all of us to take action and remedy the situation. Words also matter when discussing what happened and ultimately in how to respond. We also believe that the responsibility for a crash matters, especially those involving an impaired driver. Far too often we hear or see in the media that an impaired driver was involved in an "accident". That kind of statement is far from the truth as we all know that impaired driving crashes can be prevented and by referring to such a crash as an "accident" lessens the perception of fault and can be demeaning to the victims of the crash.

Currently, over 28 State DOT offices in the country have moved away from the term "accident" when referring to roadway incidents. States such as Massachusetts and Nevada enacted legislation making this change. Illinois just recently passed HB5496 that goes into effect on July 1, 2023, changing "accident" to "crash". Changing the word "accident" to "crash" in our various statutes, publications, and other related documents will allow all of us to work towards a culture of prevention and not one of tolerance whether regarding a driver, passenger, or pedestrian.

Respectfully,

Chuck Hayes, Chair GAC on DUII