



**Testimony of
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**HB 1221
Maryland Safe Roads For Teens Act
House Environmental Matters Committee
Maryland General Assembly**

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Children's National Medical Center (Children's National) is pleased to support House Bill (HB) 1221, the "Maryland Safe Roads For Teens Act." Children's National commends Delegate Bill Bronrott for his leadership in introducing this bill, which would make further restrictions on 1) the hours that drivers under age 18 may utilize a provisional driver's license while unsupervised, and 2) the number of passengers under 21 that may ride with drivers under age 18 with a provisional driver's license.

Children's National Medical Center, a 283 bed not-for-profit academic medical center, is located in Washington, DC, but serves the pediatric health care needs of the broader Washington metropolitan region. Located just three miles from the Maryland border, Children's National annually devotes nearly 60% of its inpatient care to children from Maryland. With five outpatient centers in Maryland and specialty care services provided in eight Maryland locations, Children's National is proud to be one of the largest providers of high quality pediatric primary, specialty and emergency care to Maryland's children and families.

Children's National is pleased to be an integral part of Maryland's world-class trauma system. Designated by the Maryland Institute for Emergency Medical Services Systems (MIEMSS) as one of the state's two Level I Pediatric Trauma Centers, Children's nearly 60 percent of Children's trauma cases originate in Maryland. In fact, for the past two years, Children's National has treated more pediatric trauma cases than any other hospital in the state.

Children's National has long been an advocate for child safety and injury prevention and has implemented programs in the region to raise awareness among parents. Safe Kids Worldwide, the first national advocacy organization solely dedicated to pediatric injury prevention, was founded by Children's National in 1987.

Motor vehicle crashes continue to be the leading cause of death for 16- to 20-year-olds, accounting for approximately 5,500 occupant fatalities annually. Each year,

approximately 450,000 teenagers are injured, and 27,000 of them require hospitalization. Of those killed, approximately 63 percent are drivers and 37 percent are passengers. Two thirds of the teenagers who die in automobile crashes are male.

The statistics are disturbing enough on their own. But we have to remember that these aren't just numbers. Every one of those cases represents an individual and family tragedy – lives ended, and lives changed forever.

Beyond the emotional trauma of these tragedies, there is also an economic cost to this problem. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, the estimated economic cost of police-reported crashes involving drivers between 15 and 20 years old was \$42.3 billion.

The adolescent, as a novice driver, lacks the experience and ability to perform many of the complex tasks of ordinary driving. Compared with experienced drivers, the novice adolescent driver is less proficient in detecting and responding to hazards and controlling the vehicle. 16- to 19-year-olds have a crash rate more than four times that of mature adults.

The Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety recently published its 2010 Roadmap State Highway Safety Laws report. Since it was first published in 2004, this report has highlighted the need for every state to institute comprehensive auto safety laws to protect individuals of all ages who use our roadways everyday.

The model traffic safety laws graded and reviewed in the 2010 Roadmap have a direct impact on the number of children and teens who are injured or killed in motor vehicle crashes. More specifically, graduated driver licensing (GDL) programs introduce teens to the driving experience gradually by phasing in full driving privileges over time and in lower risk settings. As more and more states have adopted GDL, the crash rates in these states have declined about 10-30 percent. In addition, states with nighttime driving restrictions show crash reductions of up to 60 percent during restricted hours.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) has a long record of supporting child safety measures in transportation, ranging from infant car seats to teen driving safety and every stage of growth and development in between. The AAP has urged every state to pass a GDL for teen drivers. I currently serve as a member of the AAP's Committee on Pediatric Emergency Medicine.

Actions by the federal government may also impact states that do not implement graduated drivers' licensing programs. Legislation has been introduced in Congress, H.R. 1895—the STANDUP Act, to establish minimum standards for state GDL programs. If enacted, a percentage of the Highway Trust Fund monies will be withheld from states that do not enact specific GDL provisions. In addition, states that do enact these provisions within the first three years of enactment of H.R. 1895 will receive additional grants. Some of these provisions include:

- A prohibition on nighttime driving during the learner's permit and intermediate stages; and
- A passenger restriction during the learner's permit and intermediate stages (no more than one non-family member as a passenger under the age of 21 unless a licensed driver over 21 years of age is in the vehicle.)

I would like nothing better than to never see another injury or death resulting from a motor vehicle crash in Children's emergency department. As a parent and a physician, I can attest that automobile safety laws benefit children, families, our society, and our health care system. HB 1221, which contains the provisions above, will further provide young drivers with the practice, experience and support they need to mature into responsible drivers. We can protect both teenagers themselves and everyone else on and around the road as well.

Children's National Medical Center is committed to policies that improve the health and well-being of the children we serve. In fact, it is part of Children's National's mission to improve health outcomes for children regionally, nationally and internationally. As such, Children's National Medical Center respectfully urges the Committee to give a favorable report to HB 1221. HB 1221 will, without doubt, reduce the incidence of teen deaths and injuries while driving.