



Governor's Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens (GACEC)
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MEMORANDUM

DATE: February 24, 2017

TO: The Honorable Members of the Delaware General Assembly

FROM: Dafne A. Carnright, Chairperson
GACEC

RE: **House Bill No. 14 (Motorcycle Helmet Use)**

The Governor's Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens (GACEC) has reviewed **House Bill No. 14** which would amend current statute to require riders of all ages to actually wear a helmet rather than just have a helmet in their possession. Council would like to share the following observations since enactment of this legislation may act as a disability prevention measure.

If enacted, Delaware would join the majority of states in the Northeast in establishing a "universal" law requiring riders to wear helmets regardless of age. Currently, the neighboring states of New Jersey and Maryland have universal helmet laws. They are joined by New York, Massachusetts, Vermont, Virginia, West Virginia, and District of Columbia. This leads to an abnormality for riders in the I-95 corridor. A rider traveling from D.C. to New Jersey would be required to wear the helmet for the entire route except while in Delaware.

Clinical and highway safety agency support for universal helmet laws is overwhelming. Consider the following:

The CDC reports that helmets reduce the risk of deaths by 37% and head injuries by 69%.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) concluded that an annual \$1.1 billion could have been saved in economic costs, and \$7.2 billion in comprehensive costs, if all motorcyclists wore helmets in a single year.

Advocates for Highway & Auto Safety quote a Government Accountability Office (GAO) report which concluded that “laws requiring all motorcyclists to wear helmets are the only strategy proved to be effective in reducing motorcyclist fatalities.”

Public Health Law Research (PHLR) reviewed the results of 69 studies resulting in the following “bottom line”:

According to a Community Guide systemic review, there is substantial evidence to support the effectiveness of universal helmet laws in increasing helmet use among motorcyclists, and to support that universal helmet laws reduce deaths, injuries and economic costs attributable to motorcycle crashes. Partial laws do not achieve any reduction in deaths, injuries or costs.

Finally, the fiscal burden imposed on Delaware State government and the Medicaid program is often overlooked in considering the value of universal helmet laws. A NHTSA report based on past studies concluded as follows:

A number of the reviewed studies examined the question of who pays for medical costs. Only slightly more than half of motorcycle crash victims have private health insurance. For patients without private insurance, a majority of medical costs are paid by the government. Some crash patients are covered directly through Medicaid or another government program. Others, who are listed by the hospital as “self-pay” status, might eventually become indigent and qualify for Medicaid when their costs reach a certain level.

NHTSA, “Costs of Injuries Resulting from Motorcycle Crashes: A Literature Review, published at https://one.nhtsa.gov/people/injury/pedbimot/motorcycle/motorcycle_html/overview.html.

Thank you for your time and consideration of our observations. Please feel free to contact me or Wendy Strauss at the GACEC office should you have any questions.

CC: The honorable Kara Odom Walker, Department of Health & Social Services
The honorable Jennifer Cohan, Delaware Department of Transportation
The honorable Robert Coupe, Department of Safety and Homeland Security