



Mothers Against Drunk Driving
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June 3, 2009

The Honorable Jim Sullivan
Room 15 South
State Capitol
P.O. Box 7882
Madison, WI 53707

Dear Senator Sullivan,

Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) appreciates your dedicated efforts to reform Wisconsin's drunk driving law. MADD commends your leadership in pursuing needed and necessary improvements to Wisconsin's OWI law.

Senate Bill 66 falls short as a comprehensive legislative measure in reforming OWI law in Wisconsin. This is evident as ignition interlocks would only be required for repeat offenders who register a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) of .16 or above. This incremental step follows a line of small steps in previous sessions that focus mostly on the repeat OWI offenders. When the legislature increases penalties for repeat offenders, the results are clear: drunk driving deaths, injuries and arrests do not decline.

Senate Bill 66 could be improved to better address the problem of drunk driving if ignition interlocks were required for all convicted drunk drivers. However, given the opposition by leadership to such a proposal, MADD hopes you consider an amendment to Senate Bill 66 to require ignition interlocks for first time convicted drunk drivers who have a BAC of .15 or greater.

Interlocks have been proven to reduce repeat drunk driving offenses by an average of 64 percent when installed on the vehicles of a convicted drunk driver. Since 2002, New Mexico's interlock laws helped save lives with drunk driving recidivism reduced by 65 percent, alcohol involved crashes down by 31 percent, alcohol related injuries down by 39 percent and alcohol related fatalities down by 35 percent.

Senate Bill 66 does include some necessary revisions to how a first time offender is handled in some instances as the .08-.099 loophole is closed and a conviction would remain on a record for a lifetime. MADD favors this component of Senate Bill 66 but believes more action must be taken to save lives in Wisconsin.

Wisconsin should join the other 49 states and treat drunk driving as something more than a traffic ticket. After all, a first time offender is not someone who made one mistake. We know first-time offenders have driven drunk on average of 87 times before the first arrest.ⁱ In Wisconsin, most drunk driving fatalities are not caused by repeat offenders, but by those with no prior OWI convictions.ⁱⁱ MADD hopes lawmakers make the 1st OWI offense a criminal misdemeanor and require ignition interlocks for someone arrested with an illegal BAC of .08 or greater. Taking this action will help in deterring people from driving drunk and will save more lives.

Another preventative technique involves allowing local law enforcement the option of performing sobriety checkpoints. The Centers for Disease Control found following the implementation of sobriety checkpoints that alcohol related crashes are reduced by 20 percent and fatal crashes were reduced by 23 percent.ⁱⁱⁱ The goal of a checkpoint is to prevent and deter people from driving drunk. Just as airports are allowed to have metal detectors to prevent against acts of terrorism, law enforcement should be given the constitutionally protected option of performing sobriety checkpoints, as this countermeasure is another tool to protect the people and prevent drunk driving.

Again, MADD thanks you for your efforts to eliminate the violent crime of drunk driving in Wisconsin. MADD respectfully asks for your consideration in amending Senate Bill 66 to require ignition interlocks for first time convicted drunk drivers with a BAC of .15 or greater.

Thank you in advance for your prompt consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Laura Dean-Mooney
National President
Mothers Against Drunk Driving

Cc: The Honorable Russell Decker, Senate Majority Leader
Members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary, Corrections, Insurance, Campaign Finance Reform, and Housing

ⁱ Zador, Paul, Sheila Krawchuk, and B. Moore (1997) "Drinking and Driving Trips, Stops by Police, and Arrests: Analysis of the 1995 National Survey of Drinking and Driving Attitudes and Behavior," Rockville, MD: Estat, Inc. 1997.

ⁱⁱ "Wisconsin 2003 Traffic Crash Facts: Section 6:Alcohol"
<http://www.dot.state.wi.us/safety/motorist/crashfacts/docs/alcohol-section6.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ Effectiveness of Sobriety Checkpoints for Preventing Alcohol-Involved Crashes. Centers for Disease Control: The Guide to Community Preventative Services. www.thecommunityguide.org. December 27, 2002.