



# Oregon

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**DATE:** February 15, 2013

**TO:** House Committee on Transportation and Economic Development

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**SUBJECT:** HB 2264—Teen Driver Education Expansion

## INTRODUCTION

HB 2264 amends the teen driver education program statutes to increase the number of teens who complete the program. It offers incentives to teens and their parents, creates adaptive strategies for under-served areas of the state, and holds driver education providers accountable in a more effective way.

## BACKGROUND

The Oregon Legislature adopted the Teen Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) program in 1999. There are two components to the GDL program: formal driver education for teens before they get a license and restrictions on the provisional license for one year or until the teen turns 18. To be allowed to test for a driver license, a teen must complete 50 hours of practice driving supervised by an adult and complete an ODOT-approved driver education course. In lieu of the course, the teen may practice an additional 50 hours. Once the teen has their provisional license, they are restricted from driving from midnight to 5:00 a.m., and are limited in how many teens they may have as passenger in the vehicle. The GDL program has shown tremendous life-saving results.

The Teen GDL program, with driver education as one component, has helped slash fatal and injury crashes for teen drivers by more than one-half since 1999. From 1999 through 2011, the number of teens involved in fatal and serious injury crashes has declined 58.5% for 16-year-olds and 45.6% for 17-year-olds. That means statistically there were 681 fewer fatal and serious injury crashes with 17-year-olds behind the wheel, and 699 fewer fatal and serious injury crashes with 16-year-olds behind the wheel, in 2011 than in 1998. In other words, in 2011 alone there were 1,380 fewer deaths or serious injuries on Oregon roads with a 16- or 17-year-old driver behind the wheel compared to 1998.

About 25,000 teens receive a driver license each year and, of those, approximately 7000 complete ODOT-approved driver education (average over last five years). In 2011, 15,695 teens who received their license did not take advantage of approved driver education. By offering additional incentives for teens taking driver education we can increase participation in the program, which reduces fatal and injury crashes. Correspondingly it will reduce the financial impacts on the citizens of Oregon that come as a result of these crashes.

February 15, 2013

House Committee on Transportation and Economic Development

Page 2

Oregon subsidizes driver education programs delivered through private companies, public high schools, community colleges, Education Services Districts and counties. The subsidy is paid to the provider so they can lower the cost to each student. Tuition cost to the student/parent, after the subsidy, ranges from zero to \$350, depending on the provider. By law the maximum subsidy is \$210 per qualified student, and today the maximum is paid. (The law allows a reduction if full funding is not possible.) The subsidy is funded by the Student Driver Training Fund (SDTF), which is supported by a \$6 fee on every driver license issuance or renewal. At the current rate of participation the fund is projected to last at least eight years at the full \$210 subsidy. The SDTF further subsidizes the cost of teen driver education by paying the cost for extensive instructor training and giving curriculum materials to providers.

But paying several hundred dollars, even for a valuable training, can be a struggle for some families. Fifty-four percent of Oregon families with children qualify for either the free or reduced lunch subsidy.

There are 56 ODOT approved driver education providers in Oregon providing access at 158 sites (see attached). The distribution of these providers and the number of sites is not sufficient to support statewide coverage for all teens in all areas. Both public and private providers are hesitant to invest in schools in the outlying areas due to the expense and the remote location challenges with driver education.

ODOT currently has the ability to remove a provider from approved status for non-compliance or other issues. When a provider or instructor is found to be in non-compliance, ODOT does not have the authority for progressive discipline, which can result in consequences that are more or less severe than a situation warrants. Multiple levels of sanctions would allow the department to equitably enforce the rules.

## **WHAT THE BILL DOES**

The bill allows ODOT to add a subsidy for low income students who qualify for state free and reduced lunch to further reduce the driver education cost to the parent/teen. In addition, the bill allows ODOT to develop adaptive strategies to increase availability of the program in underserved areas of the state. Examples of adaptive strategies include financial subsidies to providers, administrative assistance in setting up a program, and granting exceptions to standards that may be difficult to meet in less-populated areas. Finally, the bill allows ODOT a range of sanctions to impose on non-compliant providers and instructors rather than having just one option: decertification.

ODOT would monitor all of these changes for impacts to teen driver safety, availability of courses, number of students served, costs to consumers, and health of the subsidy fund. The fundamental goal of the bill is for more teens to take driver education, ultimately leading to many more lives saved.

## **SUMMARY**

With the passage of this bill, teen Oregonians will have greater access to driver education through enhanced subsidies and adaptive strategies designed to benefit families in underserved areas and with lower incomes. In addition, the driver education program will be more effective in handling compliance issues. The bill is expected to save lives and will be monitored for that impact, as well as for geographic expansion of course offerings and reduction in costs to consumers.

### Attachments:

Teen crash data 1998-2011

Map of all Oregon Driver Sites operated by Providers

# Teen Drivers in Fatal or Injury Crashes (Oregon)



