

DATE: March 16, 2015
TO: House Committee on Transportation and Economic Development
FROM: Jim Botwinis, AARP Oregon
RE: Opposition to HB 2819

Madam Chairperson, and members of the House Committee on Transportation and Economic Development, good afternoon. My name is Jim Botwinis and I am here on behalf of AARP Oregon in opposition to HB2819. I am also a District Coordinator, Trainer, and Instructor for the AARP Driver Safety Program, and retired from law enforcement approximately 11 years ago.

HB2819 basically requires licensees 75 years of age or older to take a drive test or submit a certificate from a licensed medical professional that the licensee does not have any cognitive or functional impairment that affects the licensee's ability to operate a motor vehicle every four years.

Three questions that came to mind right away:

- The first question is, why 75?
- Second, doesn't every licensed driver, regardless of age, have a responsibility to be a safe driver?

- Third, doesn't everyone have a right to travel our highways safely regardless of our age?

Oregon already requires that drivers at 50 years of age must appear in-person at DMV each time they renew their drivers' license for a vision check. Surely DMV employees have been trained to recognize cognitive or functional impairment.

I reviewed research information on the subject and found none that shows drivers 75 and older are any more unsafe on the road than drivers younger than they are. However, it does appear that young drivers, age 18 -24, are much more likely to be involved in a crash than any other age group.

How many crashes are caused as a result of distracted driving? How many laws do we have making it unlawful to drive distracted? Regardless of the law, drivers still use their vehicles as mobile beauty salons, restaurants, concert halls, libraries, movie theaters, and talking and texting on their cell phones. How many drivers 75 or older have you seen engaging in these activities?

Do older drivers have issues that can negatively affect their driving? Of course, medications, reduced mobility, hearing, or vision are all factors. However, younger drivers also can and do suffer from some of the same issues.

Per the many driver safety classes I have taught, many of the participants have expressed they have discontinued driving after dark, avoid busy highways, and avoid commute traffic hours. In other words, many of them are already self-regulating when they do and don't drive.

If we want to regulate when one should or shouldn't have a driver's license or drive an automobile then shouldn't those regulations apply to all licensed drivers?

Simply because a driver is older does not make them an unsafe driver. I have observed drivers who appear to be 10 - 15 years younger than the targeted 75 years of age standard that probably shouldn't be driving. And, let's not even get started on the younger drivers and their driving behaviors.

What might be an appropriate process is to require driver safety/education classes for all ages who have x number of citations or crashes within a twelve (12) month period. Courses should be DMV approved and require a certificate of completion or something in writing that shows who sponsored the class and the date upon which the course was completed.

This bill does not address the problems that exist with drivers of any age. Using a 75 or older standard seems very discriminatory. Many of us will be 75 some day. Do you want to be subjected to standards because of your age rather than to everyone who has a driver's license?

Additionally, this bill seems contrary to the work that was done by the HB3185 work group.

Madam Chairperson and members of the committee thank you for allowing me the opportunity to present this testimony today. AARP Oregon respectfully asks that HB2819 not receive a do pass recommendation.

Respectfully submitted,
Jim Botwinis